The Washington Monthly

December 2002
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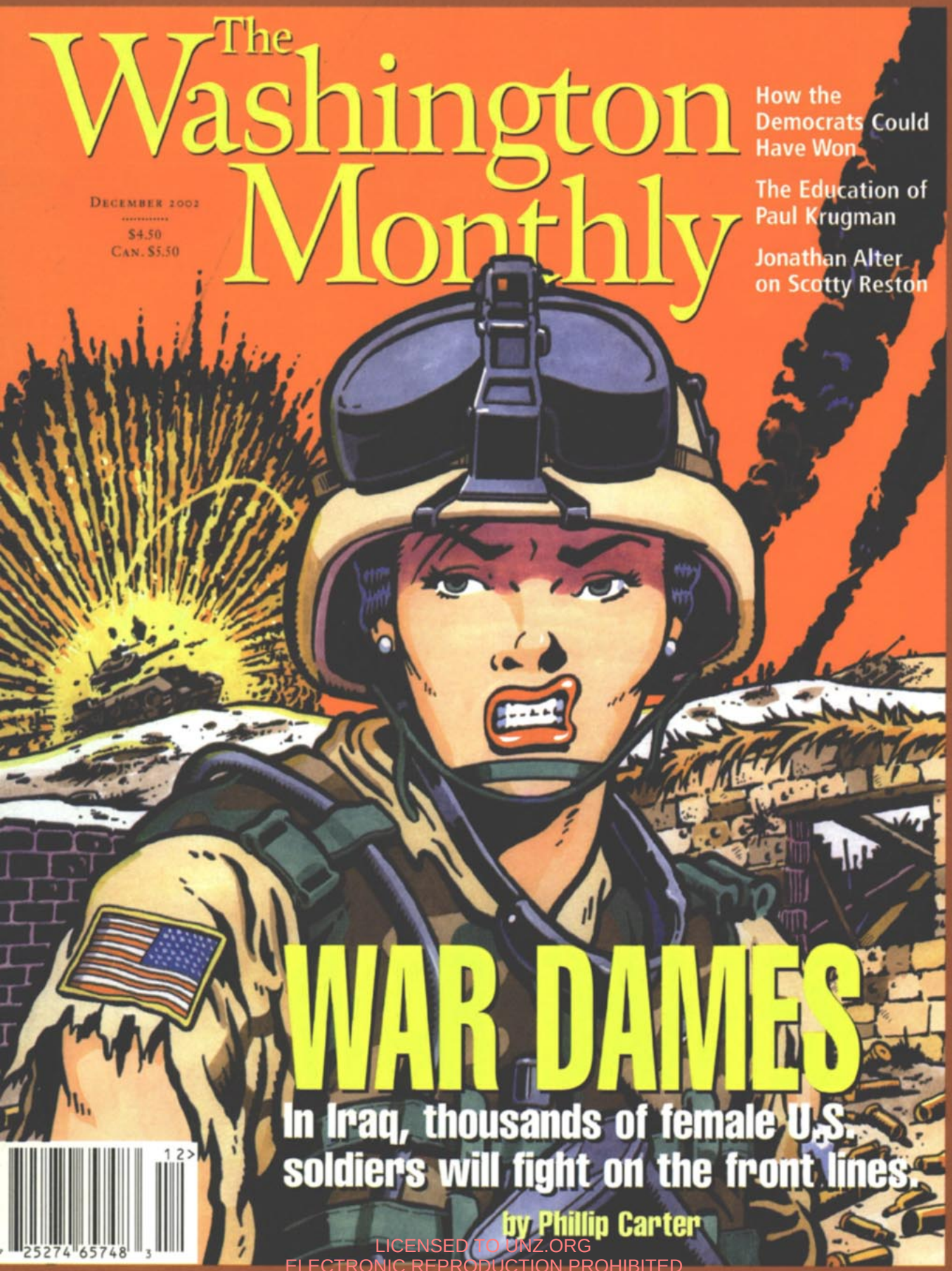
How the Democrats Could Have Won

The Education of Paul Krugman

Jonathan Alter on Scotty Reston



WAR DAMES

In Iraq, thousands of female U.S. soldiers will fight on the front lines.

by Phillip Carter

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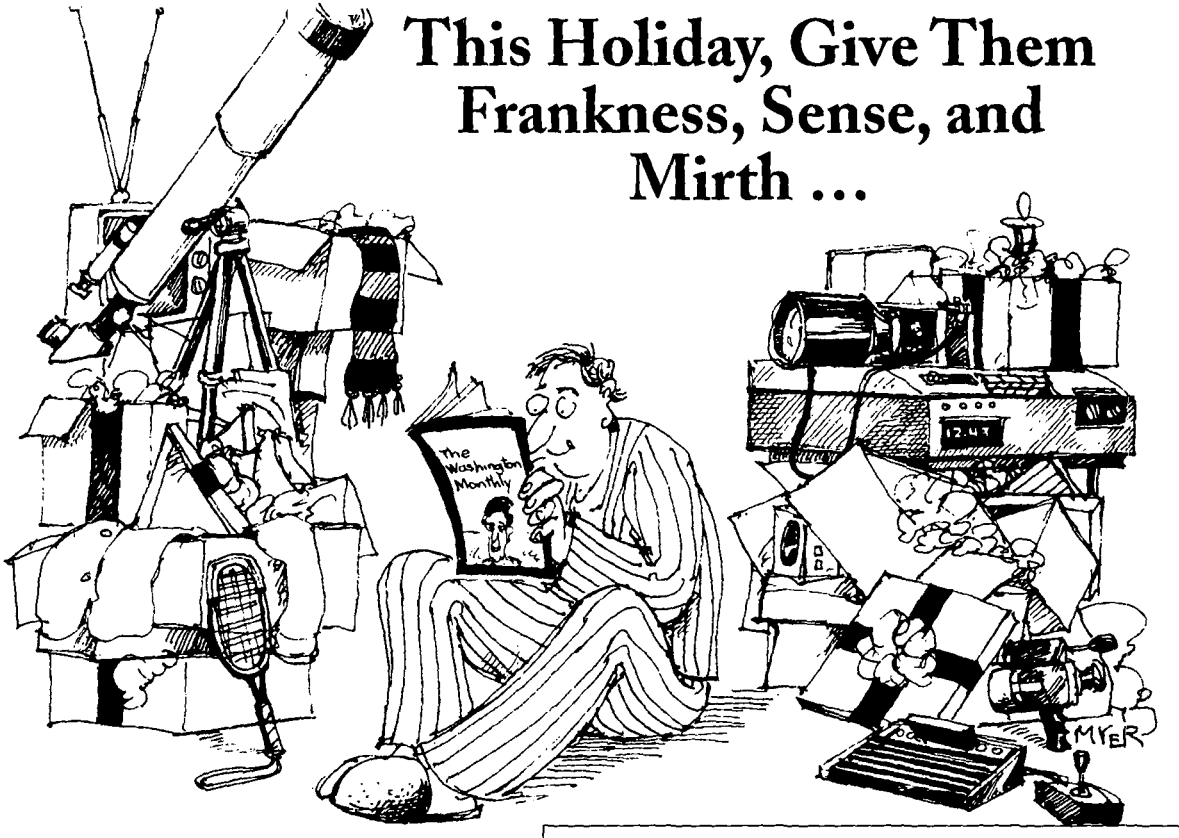
This Holiday, Give Them Frankness, Sense, and Mirth ...



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Letters

Bubble Wrath

Phillip J. Longman ("Bad Press," October) makes any number of thought-provoking points in his recent broadside at the failings of business journalism. But he is wrong to suggest that *Fortune*'s coverage of AOL Time Warner has been tempered by the fact that we're AOL Time Warner employees. If he'd been willing to look at what we'd actually written, he would have found that shortly after the merger of AOL and Time Warner was announced, *Fortune*'s Carol Loomis wrote a tough-minded—and quite prescient—story questioning the growth assumptions the merger was based on. Long before it became a public issue, *Fortune* wrote a story raising questions about some of AOL's accounting practices. We were the first to ask whether former CEO Gerald Levin left voluntarily, or was pushed by the board. And so on. We've also, in that time, written stories praising one aspect or another of the company's strategies—when we've felt praise was truly merited. The point is, AOL Time Warner is an important company for our readers to know about, and we work hard at covering it without fear or favor.

JOSEPH NOCERA
Executive Editor, Fortune

While I agree with much of what Longman had to say, I take issue with his snide characterization of the *Industry Standard* as a place "where reporters once took time off from chronicling the achievements of dot-com heroes to enjoy in-house massages and open-bar parties graced by belly dancers." Sure, the *Standard* benefitted from the once-frenzied advertising spending in the Internet sector. But to suggest that the quality of the journalism was anything less than fair, balanced, and skeptical would be inaccurate. Our editorial staff prided itself on taking the skeptical view. Even as Wall Street was cheering the sector on in 1998, 1999, and early 2000, we continually warned about the dangers posed by the euphoric optimism public and private investors were displaying about the future of the Internet business. Consider the following excerpt from the magazine: "Now, no one has more faith in the future of the Internet Economy than we do. But investors' voracious appetite for new Net companies is unsettling. How many online drugstores do we need? How many free ISPs? How many business-to-business auctions? While we admire the entrepreneurial spirit of all those startups, it's hard not to suspect that things will end badly."

ERIC J. SAVITZ
former Executive Editor, The Industry Standard

Longman writes that "*Business Week* ... in the late 1990s proclaimed an end to the business cycle." As far as I know, *Business Week* did not write that business cycles were dead, or anything remotely like that. Quite the contrary—we regularly reminded readers that a technology-driven economy was vulnerable to sharp downturns. In a March 1997 cover story, we wrote that "with high tech having grown so big, the economy is now vulnerable to a high-tech slowdown in a way that was never true before." In August 1998, we published a story headlined, "Yes, Virginia, There Will Be Recessions." In February 1999, we wrote that "investment-led expansions that occur when new technologies are emerging will inevitably come to an end—often in ugly ways." And in February 2000, before the stock market peaked, we published a piece which said that "sooner, rather than later, the New Economy boom is likely to be followed by a New Economy bust—a recession and stock market decline that could be much deeper than most people expect."

MICHAEL J. MANDEL
Chief Economist, Business Week

Phillip J. Longman replies: To Joe Nocera, a business journalist I consider among the best in the business, I say don't be so sensitive. I didn't accuse Fortune *of going light on its coverage of AOL Time Warner; I suggested it couldn't have been much fun having to endure the built-in conflict of interest involved in covering your own employer. To Michael J. Mandel, whose work I also greatly admire, I say, sure,* Business Week *published articles in which there were warnings about the end of the boom. You can even take credit for having co-written the March 1997 story you cited, which warned of a high-tech bubble. But I believe the magazine's tone was set by its editor in chief, who by 1998 was gloating in an editorial about how early* Business Week *had popularized the New Economy theory, and how he was happy to see Alan Greenspan coming around to "our view." The editorial accompanied Mandel's double-issue cover story on the future of the economy entitled: "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet."*

Mall Rants

If Joshua Green ("Monumental Failure," October) has not explored the Mall after living in Washington, D.C., for two years, I certainly feel sorry for him. The Mall is a great place, so taking an hour or two off on an afternoon to walk around looking at it is not "taking full advantage" of it. Green acts like he's Lewis and Clark when he decides to "stroll its entire length." If he cannot handle going to a national monument for a couple of hours without eating or drinking, then I hope he doesn't go to any national parks and write about them in an overly conclusive couple of paragraphs. I think that next time he should stroll down to a mall more suited to his tastes, such as the one at Union Station.

KARL HEMR
via email

Green is completely correct in his assessment that the National Mall could use a facelift. The problem is that the only thing worse than the barren Mall of today would be a Mall decorated with five Starbucks, three McDonald's, two Gaps, a Rite-Aid, and another Cheesecake Factory that no one can get into. We already have that in Georgetown.

Green is correct that if such a space were in Europe it would have some class and culture; but D.C. isn't Europe and the United States isn't known for its class or culture (unless it's pop culture). Invariably, when we try to create spaces that merge art, retail, and nourishment, we end up with Disneyfied, overly commercial areas like Union Station. Or Universal Citywalk. Or the new Times Square. And as much as the National Mall needs something—some classy eateries and couple of fountains would go a long way—it's better off with some

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austere sense of tasteful tradition.

LISA SANFORD
via email

Bad Reruns

Although not a part of Generation X ("Reality Bites," October)—I am, apparently, four years too young to be an X'er—I do own several replica Transformers and a Thundercats T-shirt, so I feel qualified to comment. Surely author Courtney Rubin must have noticed that aside from young (unmarried) people's fondness for '80s nostalgia, the new millennium has seen many other '80s retreads "get their groove back." Don Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, national missile defense, and deficits are all back in a big way. Truly, as Rubin points out, we have an affinity for the worst of the decade.

PAUL MUSGRAVE
Bloomington, Ind.

Spanish High

I just read Liesl Schillinger's "Spanish Disquisition" (October) and at first, being a Latino myself, I was kind of disappointed in what she was writing. But as I kept on reading, I ended up loving it. But she is wrong about one thing: Shakira is from Colombia ... not Peru.

CARLOS ALEJANDRO
Chicago, Ill.

What a brilliant and honest article by Schillinger on the collective perception of the Spanish language in our country! As a Spanish professor and a non-native speaker of the language, I have a deep appreciation of Spanish, much like Schillinger herself. I applaud her honest analysis and well-written article.

JENNIFER GARSON
Pasadena City College, Calif.

Enough already! Recent issues of the *Monthly* have included articles that frankly seem like indulgences on the part of the editors—and "Spanish Disquisition" takes the prize, an inordinately silly piece that makes pompous statements such as "French is a lovely, but preening language—judgmental but insincere." (The author then proceeds to characterize her relation to Spanish as an "amour fou" ... Ma foi!) Or how about the assertion that the Spanish influence on Western culture was broadened in the last 100 years by the "oeuvre" (that pesky preening French again) of the three Pablos—Casals, Picasso, and Neruda." Given that this essay deals with Spanish as a *language*, it is rather odd that two of the three chosen influences are not known primarily for their use of the language.

How terrific that Schillinger has had a really great South American boyfriend and that she had a trip to Spain. But why on earth would you think that her musings about this merit publication?

MARSHALL CARTER
U.S. Embassy, Buenos Aires

Election Dejection

In "One Vote Away," (October) Nicholas Confessore states, "When George W. Bush breezed through this otherwise little-noticed state to raise a few hundred thousand dollars for Thune, he stuck to farm aid." Yes, he talked a good game, but he refused to visit the drought area which was only about an hour's drive from where he spoke. These producers are facing a drought equal to, or worse than, the Dust Bowl. Bush's refusal to visit the area cost Thune votes.

KATHY GUSTAFSON
Brookings, S.D.

Confessore was correct that the most important thing at stake is total control of the White House, Senate, House, and Supreme Court by the Republicans. I do, however, think that most Democrats and even independents know that, and that is the only reason they hold their noses and vote for them despite the fact that the Democrats have basically been AWOL for the past two years. We have needed a Tip O'Neill to lead in the Congress for quite a while now. Today's "leaders" are pathetic. Most Democrats have felt abandoned by their representatives. Americans like people who know how to fight. We want to elect people who stand by their convictions, not run away from them because of what the latest polls tell them. Americans want people who speak from the heart and stick to their beliefs no matter what. Paul Wellstone was a good example.

MARIA RODRIGUEZ
San Rafael, Calif.

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Subscription rates: U.S. and possessions: one year, $44.95; two years, $79.95; three years, $109.95. For Canadian and foreign subscriptions, add $10 for surface delivery; air mail delivery add $32.

For subscription questions and address changes, please call our subscription fullfillment department at (815) 734-5817, or send an email to service@washingtonmonthly.com. For address changes, please provide six weeks' notice.

The Washington Monthly is indexed in the Book Review Index, Political Science Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service, the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, and Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory and may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Published monthly except combined Jan./Feb. and July/Aug. issues by The Washington Monthly Co., 733 15th St. NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005. Printed in U.S.A.

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Postmaster: Send change of address to *The Washington Monthly*, 733 15th St. NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C. and at additional mailing offices.

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Tilting at Windmills

BY CHARLES PETERS

Vice City • Unread Cables • $50 Cocktails • H2 as 007
If W Were Bill • What Democrats Should Do Now

I HAD HOPED KEITH BRADSHER's devastating critique of the SUV in *High and Mighty* (see Stephanie Mencimer's review, p. 44) would get those top-heavy gas-guzzlers off the road. But what we have instead is even more of a monster. It's called the H2, a civilian version of the military's Hummer.

Menacingly heavier and wider than other vehicles, it looks like its driver has a license to kill. What about its gas mileage? It doesn't have to be reported because H2s are so heavy, writes Danny Hakim of *The New York Times*, "that they do not fall under normal federal fuel-economy regulations that govern cars, SUVs, and pickups." Buyers don't seem to be bothered by the fuel economy issue, even though the vehicle costs $50,000. "If you can afford to buy an H2, if you get 10 miles to the gallon, you're not going to care," one owner told Hakim.

If all of this sounds like bad news, there's more coming. The H2 is a big success, selling out as fast as dealers can stock it without any of the special discounts being offered on almost every other vehicle.

Why do people buy it? One hint: Buyers speak of other sport utilities as "the vehicles of soccer moms."

NEW YORKERS ARE LIVING HIGH these days. You can pay $50 for a cocktail at the World Bar across the street from the United Nations building. Luxury is in. "The season's new mood," reports Ruth La Ferla in *The New York Times*, "is an effusive glamour. At a string of parties ... the look of luxury was matched by an almost palpable feeling of release—like champagne popping its own cork ... The dress code was just as extravagant at the Fashion Group event, where style-setters like Anna Wintour shed their customary cloth wraps in favor of silver fox."

The city's new mayor fits the new mood. Consider his lobbying technique: "Mayor Bloomberg has whisked the state legislature's two most powerful leaders to his posh Bermuda hideaway for serious golf and even more serious talk about his budget," reports Fredric Dicker in *The New York Post*. "Sources say the three flew out of LaGuardia Airport on Sunday morning aboard Bloomberg's personal jet and then headed for the mayor's mansion—which Bermudans say is worth at least $20 million—a stone's throw from the exclusive Mid-Ocean Golf Club."

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION IS granting the IRS a 4.8 percent increase in its enforcement budget this year. Is that enough to make more than a dent in the number of tax cheats? Not according to someone who should know, David Hariton, a tax lawyer with the leading Wall Street firm Sullivan & Cromwell. Tax avoidance has become so sophisticated, he tells David Cay Johnston of *The New York Times*, that "the government needs to devote 10 times as many resources as it does now." Johnston reports that the IRS, with its present strength, is unable to pursue 56 percent of the unreported tax on incomes of $100,000 and above, 79 percent of offshore tax evaders, and 75 percent of the individuals and corporations that simply don't bother to file tax returns.

IS THE TRANSPORTATION SECURITY AGENCY using the most cost-effective approach to recruit airport screeners? There is some reason for doubt. Recently, 20 TSA recruiters, faced with the task of finding 50 screeners for airports in southwestern Colorado and northwestern New Mexico, found it necessary to spend seven weeks at the Wyndham Park Resort and Golden Door Spa near Telluride—a resort featuring an 18-hole golf course, indoor and outdoor pools, fluffy robes, and oversized bathrooms, according to *The Wall Street Journal*'s Stephen Power. At $147 per person per night, that adds up to at least $144,060. They also paid $29,000 for "extra security" to the Mountain Village Police Department. This means that the total cost of the 50 recruits was at least $173,060. Now you can understand why the TSA's pleas for more money are greeted with some skepticism on Capitol Hill.

Incidentally, the Wyndham Park is, according to the *Journal*, "more than an hour's drive on winding two-lane roads from most of the region's airports." In Durango, the town with the region's largest airport, Best West-

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ern has rooms for $112 a night with coffee and donuts.

GEORGE W. BUSH SOLD HIS Harken Energy stock a week after he and the company's other directors had been warned by the firm's outside lawyers not to sell if they had unfavorable information about the company's prospects that outweighed the favorable facts. Bush sold his stock for $4 a share; it soon dropped to $1.25, and now sells for 20 cents.

Bush's attorney did not inform the SEC of the lawyers' warning until the day after the SEC staff had concluded there wasn't enough evidence to take action against Bush for insider trading. What a front-page story this would have been if Bill or Hillary Clinton had been in Bush's shoes! Yet, after *The Boston Globe* broke the story a week before the election, *The Washington Post* found it worthy only of page A4 two days later. Susan Schmidt, where are you?

DEMOCRATS' LOSS OF THE SENate Judiciary Committee means that we're doomed to see the federal judiciary increasingly dominated by clones of John Ashcroft, whom a respected friend of mine from Missouri says is the greatest threat to civil liberties since J. Edgar Hoover. The loss of the other committees means that there is no one to investigate wrongdoing by the Bush administration. Our only hope is that media stars will stop dreaming about being on talk shows and get back to doing investigative reporting in the great tradition of Woodward and Bernstein at their best.

SPEAKING OF SCANDALS, WHY did the Bush administration withhold the news about North Korea's development of nuclear weapons until after the Iraq war resolution had been passed? If it is true, as it appears to be, that North Korea is actually closer than Iraq to possessing a weapon of mass destruction, why shouldn't it take priority over Iraq? It seems like the White House didn't want to confuse the Congress with facts.

Democrats must lead our base instead of selling out to its worst side, as the GOP has too often done with their judicial and regulatory appointments.

IF YOU TEND to get riled up about the moral health of our society, ponder *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, a new videogame that's sweeping the country. The player is the bad guy, free to kill anyone he wants. He can pick up a prostitute, pay her for her services, then, after they are rendered, kill her and get his money back.

AT A RECENT HEARING, WHEN CIA director George Tenet was asked why the FBI was not alerted by the CIA to a cable saying that one of the 9/11 terrorists was coming to this country, he replied, "The cable that came in from the field at that time, sir, was labeled 'information only,' and I know that nobody read that cable." The senators did not follow up on that answer. They should have. If the cable contained information important enough to have been sent, why wasn't it important enough for someone at the CIA to read?

THE FACT IS THAT THE FOREIGN affairs/national security establishment is awash in unread cables. A State Department friend tells me, "Nobody reads the cables. That is, nobody but the desk officer." At State, the desk officer for a particular country knows he will be the one to face the music if a relevant cable is ignored. At the CIA, however, it appears that no one feels responsible. Remember, Tenet could confidently say, "I know that nobody read that cable."

One reason that cables are not read is that too many of them are sent and too many are distributed to too many people. The truly important messages are buried amongst the travel itineraries of colleagues, statistics on the annual rainfall in Zimbabwe, and other such odds and ends that you don't need or want to know. The system of distribution and accountability desperately needs reform so that people get only the cables that are truly relevant to their work and then are held accountable for reading them.

WASHINGTON'S FARCICAL TENdencies have rarely been on more conspicuous display than at the Civil Rights Commission, where there is a four-to-four deadlock. The conservatives include a law professor who was appointed by George W. Bush just after she wrote an article urging that the commission be abolished. The liberals are led by chair Mary Francis Berry, who critics have labeled "abrasive," "obnoxious," a "race-baiter," and a "Maoist," according to *The Washington Post*'s Peter Carlson, to whom I'm indebted for these facts. Recently, Berry announced there would be a meeting of the commission in Wilmington, Del. The conservatives decided to boycott the meeting, but two of them showed up in Washington and demanded that they be connected to the meeting by speakerphone. When their demand was denied, they

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issued a press release, "For immediate release: Two commissioners show up at U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Headquarters; Told they cannot participate in meeting."

Their indignation might have been understandable if the commissioners were full-time employees based in Washington. But they are part-time and come from all over the country to attend the meetings. So they might as well go to Wilmington as to Washington. On the other hand, Berry's reasons for holding the meeting in Wilmington were something less than compelling. For the next meeting, she has offered no reason at all for holding it in San Diego.

The Democrats' loss of the Senate means that we're doomed to see the federal judiciary increasingly dominated by clones of John Ashcroft.

I WAS TOUCHED BY THE MANY tributes to Paul Wellstone, especially by those from conservatives like David Brooks, Peggy Noonan, Fred Barnes, and Robert Novak. But there was one theme that ran through the praise that I found disturbing. It was that he was a "pure liberal" or "honest liberal," never a "New Democrat" or "moderate." My friend and former colleague Timothy Noah asks in *Slate*, "Can't a New Democrat or a neoliberal be just as true to his beliefs as Wellstone was to his?" True, some of us may be in the center out of cowardice or cynicism. But isn't it also possible that some of us are there because of our beliefs? Just because our principles may be a mixture of conservative, liberal, and middle-of-the-road, it doesn't mean that our convictions are any less strong or pure or honest.

THE TSA'S SINS ARE NOT CONfined to its selection of hotels. It also appears to be cannibalizing much of the rest of the government. Consider Gail Linkins, the TSA's security director at the Mobile (Ala.) Regional Airport. Her senior staff—you've got to love the fact that the Mobile Regional Airport director has a senior staff—consists of a former Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms officer, a former U.S. marshal, and a former administrative officer at the U.S. attorney's office, reports *The Washington Post*'s Stephen Barr.

The TSA's air marshals program has already taken 60 members of the U.S. Capitol police. Mayor Anthony Williams tells *The Washington Times* that the marshals program is pulling away the District's "most seasoned veterans."

SO THAT THE CIA WILL SIT UP and pay attention to those terrorist messages, I suggest they try the label that the State Department puts on such cables: VISA VIPER.

THE *Monthly* HAS LONG TAKEN pride in being Washington's resident anthropologist. And it is in that role that we advise you of a recent subtle change in the city's culture identified by *The Washington Post*'s Juliet Eilperin.

It used to be that lobbyists could succeed by being a good friend and a generous contributor to the target politician. Now there is something else you must do: go back home with the politician and help him campaign.

"The price of access has gone up," one lobbyist tells Eilperin. "It's becoming increasingly clear that fundraising is not enough anymore," says another. "You have to do your part on the grassroots and be part of the ground game."

"ARMY WEIGHS PRIVATIZING Close to 214,000 Jobs," was the headline on a Nov. 3 story in *The Washington Post*. On the newsstand that day was the Nov. 4 issue of *U.S. News & World Report*, with a feature article entitled "America's Secret Army: A swarm of private contractors bedevils the U.S. military," which identified the problems that have followed in the wake of privatization efforts the military has already made. They hint strongly that, although it may be a dandy idea to outsource functions like garbage collection at bases here in the United States, it may not be such a good idea to privatize essential functions overseas such as weapons maintenance. Contractors are subject to military orders only in an inefficient and roundabout way, through the contracting officer. Also, they are not permitted to carry arms. If they are permitted to do so for self-protection, who is going to train and oversee them? Most nettlesome of all is the potential for price-gouging by a sole-source contractor performing an essential function: "I deeply regret to inform you that the recent economic downturn has compelled me to double my charge."

THE CALIFORNIA THREE-STRIKES law is before the U.S. Supreme Court this year. I hope the court rules against it. Not that I'm automatically against three-strikes laws. Far from it. I favor them when the offenses are violent crimes. But the California law is applied, writes Charles Lane of *The Washington Post*, even "when a third felony conviction is for a nonviolent crime—even one that

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could have been charged as a misdemeanor if the prosecutor had wanted to." For 57 percent of the 7,000 prisoners doing life under the California law, the third strike was a nonviolent crime. In the case now before the Supreme Court, the third strike was a conviction for shoplifting videotapes worth $150.

KATHLEEN KENNEDY TOWNSEND has been my friend for 20 years. Many of you know her as the writer of several thoughtful articles that have appeared in these pages. Her loss in the recent gubernatorial election in Maryland has saddened me. But I'm more mad than sad—mad at the press for its relentless picking at her faults while too often giving her opponent a softer ride. I had been increasingly irritated by this tendency over recent months, but had not taken the trouble to document it. By Oct. 20, I was disturbed enough to carefully follow the coverage for five days by the editors and writers of *The Washington Post* Metro section. During that time, they ran three negative stories about Kathleen on the front page of the Metro section: "Townsend's Anti-Crime Efforts Struggle," "Townsend Attacked on Gun Checks," and "Maryland's Defunct Crime Institute Costs $200,000: Townsend Project Halted Two Months After its Launch." There were no positive headlines about Kathleen.

For her opponent, there was only one headline that could appear negative to at least some people: "Ehrlich Defends His Stance on Abortion: Activists Say Gubernatorial Hopeful Opposes a Woman's Right to Choose." And that story appeared not on Metro's page one but on page six. The only front-page Metro mention of Ehrlich was the kind of photo a candidate would sell his soul for, showing a smiling Ehrlich holding his smiling three-year-old son, surrounded by smiling supporters.

The editorial pages of *The Washington Post* and *The Baltimore Sun* endorsed Kathleen. So why the rough treatment by the reporters? (The *Sun*'s were equally guilty.) As the frontrunner for a long time, she was the most tempting target to take down a notch or two, and that temptation was compounded by her own missteps and even more by her family's celebrity. Beyond that, there's a tendency for reporters, most of whom are liberal, to bend over backward to criticize liberals and to wake up too late to the damage they are doing. I have seen this tendency work against Hubert Humphrey, George McGovern, Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and, most recently, Al Gore. Remember how the reporters would jump all over Gore for his "exaggerations" on minor matters,

while ignoring Bush's substantive lies—for example, three about Texas health care in just one debate?

IT WAS A BIG STORY ON THE business pages last month when Citigroup named Sally Krawcheck to run its research and brokerage division, which will be called Smith Barney, which is just what it used to be called before it was acquired by Salomon Brothers, which in turn was acquired by Travelers Group, which itself was acquired by Citigroup.

What distinguishes Ms. Krawcheck is that she talks tough and once had the nerve to downgrade an enterprise headed by Citigroup chief Sanford Weill. But will Krawcheck really be all that different from the usual rah-rah Wall Street analysts? After all, the name of the game is getting customers to buy stock. So let's look at what her most recent recommendations were at Sanford C. Bernstein & Co., her last company: Only 5.4 percent were "sell" or "strong sell." In other words, 94.6 percent were optimistic.

LAST MONTH'S ARTICLE ABOUT liberal helplessness on defense issues ("War Torn," by Heather Hurlburt) modestly refrained from mentioning the *Monthly*'s long effort to inspire our fellow liberals to play a constructively critical role on defense. I'm not so modest. Indeed, I'm very proud of what we did, beginning with an article in our second issue called "How the Pentagon Can Save $9 Billion," and we meant without cutting muscle. We were always willing to take responsibility for distinguishing between what was needed and what wasn't. To give just one example of our pioneering on what was needed, Gregg Easterbrook wrote in 1984 about the need for a drone plane a decade before the first one went into action in Bosnia.

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IN THE WAKE OF THE DISASTER last month, here's my advice to my fellow Democrats:

Don't let the Republicans seize the middle. Expose the phoniness of Wall Street reform à la Harvey Pitt, of prescription drug benefits that don't give enough help to enough people, and of leave-no-child-behind education programs that do not provide the money to really improve poor schools. When the Republicans actually have good ideas, as in the case of seeking higher standards and better teachers, you can warmly embrace them, confident in the sure and certain knowledge that they will be few and far between. The GOP is far too firmly rooted in its right wing.

Democrats must accept their responsibility to master military issues. We need new Gary Harts and Sam Nunns.

Lead the base; don't follow its lowest common denominator. The Democratic base consists of women, minorities, and unions, especially those of public employees and teachers, who are the party's major contributors. It is essential that we lead our base instead of selling out to its worst side, as the Republicans have too often done with their judicial and regulatory appointments.

Consider, for example, the public employees' unions, whose wishes the Democrats followed by opposing flexibility in hiring and firing for the homeland security agency. This cost at least one Senate seat, Max Cleland's in Georgia. Public employees and teachers need to realize that the Democratic Party is their friend in recognizing the importance of government and of the public schools. They also need to realize that the best interests of good government and good schools are served when the best civil servants and teachers are hired, and the worst are fired.

Don't talk down. Don't treat people who oppose liberal policies such as gun control and abortion as cretins. Often they are workers and farmers who would be our natural political allies on economic issues. Treating them with disdain doesn't win elections. Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter understood this, and they are the only Democrats to win the presidency in the last 34 years.

Have faith in the common sense of the people and explain. Too often Democrats assume the public can't or won't understand. For example, the real position of most Democrats on Iraq was that there was no need to rush to decision in October because there was no evidence of imminent danger and that Bush's effort to keep the issue on the front burner in September and October was designed to keep economic issues that would favor the Democrats off the front pages. Why didn't they explain themselves? Doing so would have enabled them to expose Bush's cynical manipulation and at the same time put the spotlight on his administration's economic and regulatory failures.

On terrorism, the Democrats need to explain that invading Iraq will not deal with its main causes—Islamic fundamentalism and the strife between Jews and Arabs that Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton worked so hard to end and that George W. Bush has largely ignored.

On the danger of nuclear weapons, those lying around the former Soviet Union remain a far greater danger than those supposedly being developed by Iraq and North Korea. And so are the nuclear weapons held by Pakistan, where an unstable government is threatened by a rising tide of anti-Americanism.

On tax cuts, Democrats must explain how the future Bush tax cuts and others the Republicans are talking about benefit mostly or only the rich. If and when tax cuts are necessary, Democrats should explain that the equivalent of a partial rebate of the payroll tax is the best way to help working people.

On health care, the Democrats need to explain that they have been the party that from Truman to Johnson to Bill and Hillary Clinton has tried to expand the protection of the American people against the expense of medical care. The greatest challenge for the party is to learn from the failure of the Clinton plan and develop a health program for all that the American people can and will support, for this is our greatest need.

On regulation, the Democrats must explain that they have been the protectors of the environment, economic fairplay, and public health and safety, and that the Republican deregulators have usually been the enemy.

Where they don't know enough to explain, they need to learn. Democrats must accept their responsibility to master military issues. We need new Gary Harts and Sam Nunns. And that means a lot of Democrats have to learn a lot more than they know now so that they can discuss equipment and manpower needs with authority. This is not only relevant to national preparedness but to making sure that we do not waste money that could be spent on health and education to develop weapons that we don't truly need.

Finally Democrats must always remember that we are the party not of the privileged but of the people, that we have a proud history of protecting the powerless from the powerful, of caring about what happens to average everyday Americans and of appealing to the generosity and idealism in the human spirit. If we remain true to ourselves, victory at the polls will come.

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How Democrats Could Have Won

Three ideas that might have changed the election.

BY PAUL GLASTRIS

HOURS AFTER THE POLLS CLOSED last month, a rough consensus emerged on why the Democrats got shellacked: They had no message. They had tried to pin the blame for a weak economy on the GOP, but offered no alternative economic plan of their own. They had criticized the administration's fiscal irresponsibility, but didn't call for repeal of the president's tax cuts, for which many Democrats had voted. They had talked incessantly about their new prescription-drug plan for seniors, but found that voters couldn't distinguish between their plan and the Republicans'. The "no message" critique was neatly summed up by Frank Rich in *The New York Times:* "A unified vision composed of actual policies and principles, as opposed to knee-jerk liberal sloganeering, cynical political strategies and anti-Bush whining, is now required."

Well said. So, Frank, got any ideas? Apparently not, at least none that he chose to share with his readers. Pretty much every other pundit in America responded the same way: with contempt for the Democrats' message, but without saying precisely what a winning alternative message might have looked like. My colleague Jonathan Rowe once commented that we journalists have the moral courage of snipers: We take pot shots from a position in which we can't be hit back. Then we wonder why the American people hate us.

So, in the interests of full exposure, here are three ideas which, had the Democrats run on them, might have made a real difference at the polls.

Tax cuts for everybody now, rather than for the rich later.

The vast majority of Democratic lawmakers no doubt think last year's $1.35-trillion tax cut was an abomination—especially the elimination of the estate tax, a $740 billion gift to the idle children of billionaires. One suspects this to be true even of a number of the Democratic senators from conservative states who voted for it. But had the party campaigned on a platform of rescinding the tax cut, there would probably be 40 Democrats in the senate today rather than 48. This disconnect between what Democrats believe in their hearts on taxes and what they said—or didn't say—to survive politically is probably the single biggest reason why the party seems soulless and adrift.

But there was a way out of this dilemma, one tied to the only victory Democrats have won on taxes over the last two years. Recall that while Senate Democrats didn't have the votes to block the president's tax bill, those who ultimately did vote for it were able, by teaming up with moderate Republicans, to shift some of the cuts away from future rate reductions for the rich to immediate tax rebates for average Americans. It was that effort that resulted in the checks voters got from the IRS last fall.

Of course, the president took credit for those rebates; most voters don't know or remember that it was Democrats who delivered them. But Democrats would have had a chance to remind the voters of this, and at the same time put Republicans on the defen-

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sive on their signature issue, had they gotten behind one big idea: a massive, short-term payroll-based tax rebate, paid for, dollar for dollar, by rescinding last year's estate tax cut—in other words, tax cuts for everyone now rather than for the rich later.

As a matter of pure economic policy, giving every worker an immediate tax rebate makes far more sense than providing the same amount of tax relief to future inheritors. If the rebates are spaced out over several years so as not to be too large in any one year (otherwise you run the risk of significantly higher interest rates or even a currency crisis), the effect would be stimulatory. More cash in the hands of consumers now could boost economic growth, spark a return of business investment, and lift the stock market. In other words, such a proposal might have served as the economic plan the Democrats lacked.

With such a plan, Democrats might also have been better able to capitalize on this year's corporate corruption scandals. Voters were plenty steamed about Enron and the Bush administration's connection to it. But that anger never translated into support for Democrats, in part because the party's hands weren't clean (some Democrats had taken Enron money), but more importantly because, aside from stronger accounting rules, Democrats offered no new economic ideas that put average Americans first—ideas that would have provided a concrete alternative to the GOP's crony capitalism.

Had they done so, every new twist in the corporate scandal drama would have given Democrats another opportunity to mention their egalitarian tax cut plan, thereby contrasting two visions of how to run the economy. At their best, Democrats are less about ideologies or abstractions than about getting the best deal for average Americans in any given set of conditions or circumstances. A payroll-based tax cut would have done exactly that. Without such a concrete policy, Democrats had no credibility with voters.

I know what you're thinking: Republicans would have had a field day by framing such a plan as a tax increase. But Democrats should have welcomed that debate, because they would have won it. Voters can do arithmetic, especially when it involves money that might or might not go into their pockets. Moving the tax cut from column A (the rich) to column B (everyone), is plainly not a tax increase. The more Republicans insisted otherwise, the more they would have been drawn into a discussion of why they believed a tax rebate for ordinary voters was less important than one for Bill Gates's kids.

We're the party of multilateral action against Saddam, they're not.

A guiding theory of the Democrats' campaign strategy seemed to be "pretend 9/11 never happened." Aside from some patriotic bromides, Democrats tried to talk almost exclusively about domestic issues, as if they could will away the fact that 9/11 has left citizens more deeply concerned about the security of the nation than they have been for decades. Democrats acted this way not just because polls show Republicans have an advantage on defense issues, but because, when it comes to matters of war, they just haven't adequately thought the issues through.

Case in point: Over the spring and summer, Washington debated the wisdom of the Bush administration's plan to invade Iraq unilaterally. Congressional Democrats were divided. Some, including those eying a White House run in 2004, took the administration's side. Most of the rest wanted nothing to do with any war in Iraq, but, afraid of sounding weak, confined themselves to asking "tough" questions about the president's plans without offering any persuasive alternative strategy to keep Saddam from getting nuclear weapons.

Of course, there was an alternative strategy. Instead of unilateral war, the United States could use the threat of force to get U.N. weapons inspectors back into Iraq—the position this magazine took in June. It is the position to which President Bush (after much pressure from Colin Powell and his father's former advisors) switched in September. It is one with which most Americans agree. And it is the position a majority of congressional Democrats endorsed when they voted for the Iraq war resolution.

The question is, why didn't Democrats come to this conclusion months earlier, when it might have done them some good? As Heather Hurlburt argued in these pages last month:

"The irony is that a policy of using the threat of U.S. military power to enforce U.N. mandates in Iraq is one that both the hawks and at least some of the doves in the Democratic Party could have agreed on. Had they taken that position last spring—or even during the summer—Democrats might have helped shift the debate in a more sensible direction earlier, and served the country by limiting the negative international fallout from the hawks' unilateralism. They also might have helped themselves politically: When the president shifted his positions in September, it would have been seen, rightly, as a victory for the Democrats."

Instead, Democrats looked like what they were:

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followers, rather than leaders, and craven ones at that.

We're the party of homeland security, they're not.

All over America, the lips of Democrats tighten when they think about the newly elected Republican senator from Georgia, Saxby Chambliss. A draft-avoider (bum knee and three student deferments), Chambliss unseated Democratic Sen. Max Cleland, a wounded, decorated Vietnam vet, in part by accusing him of lacking the "courage to lead" because he voted against a bill to create a department of homeland security. In the history of political grudges, this is surely a good one to nurse. But Democrats should also remember that their own party leaders put Cleland in a position to lose.

Because of their defeat in the midterms, Democrats now understand, in a way they didn't before, that as risky as it may be to adopt new ideas, it is riskier not to.

Bush won the midterms for Republicans by barnstorming the country attacking Democrats for not passing his homeland security bill. Because most Democrats had voted for the war resolution, this was the president's main tool for whipping up his base and portraying Democrats like Cleland as soft on terrorism. The charge should have been preposterous. After all, Sen. Joe Lieberman, a Democrat, introduced the first homeland security bill in October, which the Bush administration opposed for seven months. Only when its man in charge of domestic security, Tom Ridge—who had little experience and zero budget authority—became a laughingstock, did the president reverse himself and get behind the idea. But he also insisted on expanding presidential powers to hire and fire employees of the proposed agency and dissolve their unions when he deemed it in the interest of national security. This pushed two congressional Democratic hot buttons: It threatened their civil-service union supporters and cut into congressional power. The Democratic leadership refused to yield.

This may have been the dumbest political mistake since Hillarycare. The resulting stalemate allowed Bush to appear the forceful advocate of national security, and to cast Democrats as obstructionists pandering to their union base.

Even if Democrats believed that worker protections were more important to the country than the flexibility the president requested—a debatable proposition—it was devastatingly shortsighted of them not to give into the president's demands in order to pass the homeland security bill. To have done so would have enabled them to legitimately claim leadership on an important national security matter. They could have spent the fall campaign season bashing the GOP for underfunding the new department.

"We're not going to roll over when it comes to principles and beliefs that we hold to be very, very important," said Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle in September. Now, of course, Daschle is the former majority leader, and there is no one in power to defend the principles on which he and his fellow Democrats refused to compromise.

In 1996, Bill Clinton found himself in a similar situation and took a different course. He was faced with a Republican version of a welfare-reform bill that contained language he and most Democrats abhorred, a provision stripping legal immigrants of their disability benefits, and signed it. Outraged liberals accused the president of selling out his principles. After winning reelection, partly on the grounds of having fulfilled his pledge to "end welfare as we know it," Clinton got those benefits reinstated (meanwhile, welfare rolls dropped 50 percent and public faith in government and the Democratic party rose). Similarly, Democrats could have fought to reimpose the union protections if they had won back the Senate (or could do so next time they gain the presidency). Instead, Democrats listened to their base, and allowed an issue that should have been a weapon to beat the GOP become a weapon with which the GOP beat them.

In hindsight, it's hard to understand why the Democrats took the path they did, of running without new ideas (or, in the case of homeland security, allowing their ideas to be co-opted by the opposition). It was probably some combination of liberal blindness, centrist caution, and simple lack of imagination. Whatever the cause, the result is exactly what this magazine warned about on its October cover: Republicans now control all three branches of the federal government for the first time since 1929. If there is any consolation—and there is not much—it is this: Because of their defeat, Democrats now understand, in a way they didn't before, that as risky as it may be to adopt new ideas, it is riskier not to. ●

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Tutor Restoration

Test-prep firms like The Princeton Review are invading America's grade schools. This is: a) good. b) bad.

BY SIOBHAN GORMAN

IN A COUNTRY WHERE HIGH SCHOOL KIDS of every stripe seem to favor the same uniforms of baggy pants or midriff-baring shirts, it can be hard to spot differences in class background. But one giveaway for juniors and seniors lies in the contents of their backpacks—there's a good chance that the more affluent will be toting test-prep materials from companies like Kaplan and Princeton Review. These are the top firms that teach courses designed to give kids a leg up on those all-important college-entrance exams, the SAT and ACT, as well as graduate school equivalents like the GMAT and LSAT. Such programs have long been controversial because, at $1,000 per 12-session course, they provide children of the affluent yet another unfair advantage in life, teaching them how to game the tests that largely determine admission to selective colleges and universities—tests that are themselves of dubious intellectual value.

Now, after years of exacerbating class differences among the college-bound, test-prep companies are expanding their offerings downward to cover children as young as six. The reason is the testing mania spawned by the school reform movement. In the 1990s, outraged by the low quality of so many public schools, many states, encouraged by Washington, imposed rigorous tests that students must pass before they can advance to the next grade. Sensing an opportunity, companies like Kaplan Inc. began developing prep courses for those tests and marketing them to the anxious parents of K-through-12 students. This fever peaked last year with the passage of President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, which requires such tests for every public school student in America in grades three through eight by 2006. Schools failing to meet annual test score standards for three straight years risk being shut down or reconstituted with new teachers, and their students must be offered private tutoring vouchers paid for by the federal government. Unsurprisingly, test-prep companies see the law, and especially its provision for federal tutoring vouchers, as a vast new opportunity. "The market for test prep is on fire," says Amy Wilkins, a senior analyst at the Education Trust.

To see these courses at work, I recently visited Kaplan's Score! Educational Center in Alexandria, Va. Sandwiched between a Whole Foods Market and a Starbucks in a typical suburban strip mall, the center was teeming with eager grade-schoolers, some of them fresh from soccer practice in red jerseys and cleats. Academic competitiveness was already in full bloom. "I want to be ahead of people, not behind them," announced one of the young soccer players, Kayvon Naghdi, who can recite by heart his score on the Virginia Standards of Learning test. Said Jessica Peraertz, proud mother of eight-year-old Isabella, "I think [Kaplan] has actually made her be ahead of other kids in her class." As students stationed themselves before computers for a two-hour tutoring class, parents hovered nearby monitoring their children's progress or ducked out to grab a latte. The one constant was that they seemed every bit as determined for their child to excel as those of older students eyeing Yale and Harvard.

Critics of high-stakes tests are up in arms against

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this creeping obsession. "There is this testing bandwagon momentum that is really getting out of hand," says Arnold F. Fege, president of Public Advocacy for Kids and a longtime activist for public schools. Critics like Fege worry that, like the SAT test prep, kiddie test prep will inordinately benefit children of the affluent; that it will draw money and emphasis from classroom learning; and that it will stress tactics and strategy over actual learning. "It reduces the motivation for learning to simply beating the tests," says Monty Neill, executive director of Massachusetts-based FairTest. "The test prep companies are sort of vultures picking at the body of the school."

Bush's focus on testing presents vast opportunities for test-prep companies.

As a matter of fact, this new test prep boom may actually do more good than harm. Indeed, if it's done right, K-12 test prep could have the opposite effect of what its critics anticipate, helping close the achievement gap rather than widen it, increase student learning rather than distract from it, and perhaps serve as one of the keys to effective standards-based education.

Teaching Kids to Score

At the Alexandria Score! center, one student stood apart from the rest. A study in urban-suburban contrast, 17-year-old Antwain Proctor sported a bright white t-shirt with "Score!" emblazoned on the back, baggy denim shorts, a nylon headband, and a stone in his left ear. Antwain had recently completed his sophomore year in high school, reading at just a second-grade level, with math skills at a fifth-grade level. Given his age and performance level, conceded Score!'s David Smith, "he's not our typical student." But he is a testimony to the possibilities of test prep.

Antwain escaped an abusive father only to drift between foster homes until his aunt, Shirley Proctor, adopted him four years ago. He has repeatedly failed Maryland's high-school exit exams and is awaiting the results of the math exam he retook in October. Desperate to get her son up to speed, Shirley signed him up for weekly visits to the Alexandria Score! center this summer, with encouraging results: After just four months, Antwain has gained almost a full grade level in both math and reading.

On the day I visited, he was plugging away at a computer terminal. As I watched, a math question flashed on his screen: "11x13=?" Antwain scratched away on a clipboard and typed in his answer, 26. Try again, the computer told him. Antwain raised his hand, and one of the center's "coaches" came over.

"One times one is two, right?" Antwain asked.

"One times anything is itself, remember?"

They went back through the problem together, step by step, on Antwain's clipboard.

Companies like Kaplan and Princeton Review earned their reputations by helping students beat college entrance exams, but as this episode indicates, their programs for elementary and middle school tests—especially for kids who are lagging in school—seem to be different. The SAT, not directly based on any curriculum, is a distinctly more abstract measure of aptitude and cleverness. Consequently, SAT test-prep courses teach test-taking strategies designed to maximize one's score, not a formal body of knowledge. Good state tests, on the other hand, measure whether a student has mastered the curriculum taught in the classroom. So test-prep courses like Antwain's focus on learning the material supposed to have been learned in school. This sort of prep work is less tactical, and more like homework. Because state-standard tests are supposed to measure actual learning, prep courses teach substance over strategy.

A sampling of test-prep publications indicates that their materials do seem more academically oriented than SAT-prep books. Kaplan's "No-Stress Guide to the 8th Grade MCAS," for the Massachusetts test offers lessons on fractions, percentages, and geometry as well as help with writing and reading comprehension. Which is not to say that it lacks tips

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for gaming the exam. The math section, for example, offers a strategic reminder to study up on triangles "since they are the MCAS makers' favorite shape." And the English composition section advises students to pay more attention to arguments than to grammar because the test assigns more points for the essay's content. But on the whole, the emphasis appears to be on learning.

The emphasis on teaching certainly seems to be benefiting Antwain. His mother is thrilled that he's finally learned how to sound out words. "I feel like I'm learning more," he told me in between math exercises. "Since I've been coming here, I've been doing better."

In fact, good test prep, says Eva Baker, a testing expert and education professor at the University of California-Los Angeles, could be a real boon to poor children. She likens it to the Japanese "jukus," the extraordinarily popular after-school prep programs for children who are gunning to pass the highly competitive middle and high school entrance exams that determine their academic future. "My experience has been—it was counterintuitive—but what I saw going on [in the jukus] was more fun and more interesting for the kids than what I saw going on in the school," she said. "If they were simply drudgery, the kids wouldn't want to go, and they would complain." Antwain's case bears this out. "He doesn't look at it as doing school work," says his mother, who sends two of her children to Score!. "Some days, I don't feel like driving there. But they bug me about going."

Antwain is lucky. He has a devoted adoptive mother who is determined to help him in school and can foot the $129 monthly bill for Score!. "I'm handling it," she says. "Sometimes you've got to cut back other things, [but] as long as he passes, and he can come out reading, then it's all worth it."

But as critics point out, many, if not most, poorer students in failing schools have neither the parental backing nor the money to attend test-prep courses, so what's the chance that they'll get this kind of preparation?

The answer is: pretty good. That's because of another crucial difference between the SAT and state-level tests: Nobody gives poor kids money to prep for the SAT, and so only students whose parents can afford it benefit. But under the new Bush plan, the federal government will commit a still-to-be-determined amount of money for tutoring services like K-12 test prep, most of which will be directed to failing schools in low-income areas—in other words, its greatest benefits should accrue to those least likely to be able to afford traditional test prep.

Robbing the Cradle

Test-prep companies have already realized that the real money for elementary and middle school test prep may lie in the city, not the suburbs, and are planning accordingly. "It's not the Scarsdales of the world who are looking for our services," says Stephen Kutno of Princeton Review. "It is the Washington D.C.s, the Baltimores, the Yonkerses ... That's where the market is."

Both Princeton Review and Kaplan began marketing to younger students with pilot projects in the 1990s. Kaplan, which targeted suburban parents who had the money for test prep with clinics like the one in Alexandria, now operates 150 Score! centers. Princeton Review developed a different strategy, selling its services to schools, not to individual parents (an approach that Kaplan also later adopted; it now offers courses in 500 schools). Today, Princeton Review runs programs in 2,000 schools in 30 states. Kutno estimates that about 80 percent of its business is in urban areas because that's where the need is and where state money has been available to pay for it. Now that the federal government is getting into the private education services area, Kutno says his company's business plan is to pursue more of the same.

Without large-scale studies, it is impossible to know how much, if any, such programs will boost youngsters' skills and test scores, but the numbers available are encouraging. Kaplan's Score! program in Brooklyn, its most popular and lowest-income center, reported that on average its students improved 1.2 grade levels in reading and 1.7 grade levels in math after six to nine months. An independent survey of test scores in five Texas schools showed that Princeton Review was significantly narrowing the achievement gap between low performers and their higher-achieving peers.

Flailing Schools

So, test prep holds promise for low-income students, and there's federal money to pay for it (a typical K-12 test-prep course costs $600—roughly the per-capita amount that most lawmakers expect the Bush tutoring vouchers to disburse). But that doesn't mean it will work. Tutoring vouchers face all the same obstacles that have ruined other federal efforts to aid poor students.

First, test prep truly boosts learning only if the

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tests themselves measure the same learning that was supposed to have been imparted in the classroom—presuming, of course, that the classroom curriculum itself is of high quality. Good tests must both cover the important material in the state curriculum and apply sophisticated measures like essay questions to gauge whether a child actually learned the material, as opposed to simpler tests that can be gamed by regurgitating memorized facts. Some states do have both strong curriculum and high quality tests, including Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Michigan. However, many states, like California, rely on cheap off-the-shelf tests like the "Stanford-9" that aren't really tied to the state curriculum. Likewise, Oregon, New Mexico, and Montana received failing grades in a recent Princeton Review Study that measured how well state tests reflect the state curriculum. This is a crucial shortcoming that the No Child Left Behind Act failed to fix (see "Bush's Big Test," by Thomas Toch, November 2001).

If it's done right, K-12 test prep could have the opposite effect of what its critics anticipate, helping to close the achievement gap rather than widen it.

Second, there are bureaucratic obstacles. One of the biggest concerns for both Kaplan and Princeton Review is that school districts will make it too difficult for parents to sign up. Teachers' unions may try to block the programs, and if schools don't take an active role in alerting parents, they may not be aware of the benefits. Princeton Review's Kutno recounted a recent such shortfall in Pennsylvania in which a complicated payment reimbursement setup appears to have led to a low participation rate in a state program for outside tutoring. As a result, Kutno decided not to seek a contract there because he feared both an insufficient market and a bookkeeping nightmare. "It wasn't a prudent business decision," he explains. State and local laws may also prove burdensome. Kaplan was rejected by North Carolina because it couldn't promise that all of its teachers would have three years' experience.

Third, good test prep can't be carried out on the cheap. Both companies offer school-based tutoring programs that rely largely on local public school teachers to impart the curriculum. School boards prefer it that way because it's cheaper—Kaplan charges four times as much to send one of their own instructors to teach a class as it does to train a teacher how to do it. This puts poor kids at a number of disadvantages. Low-performing schools got that way because the quality of teaching isn't too hot. There's little reason to believe that lousy teachers will become effective test-prep instructors with a few hours of training by Kaplan. Additionally, failing schools tend to experience high teacher turnover, and so training teachers can be expensive and fruitless for cash-strapped schools. And teachers, or at least their union leaders, tend to be the greatest opponents of high-stakes testing—hardly the type likely to embrace the benefits of test prep. Plus, in a time of shrinking state budgets, test-prep companies worry that states will find creative ways to funnel the new federal money for tutoring into day-to-day school operations. "We've had situations where money was allocated for programs like Princeton Review and after the state budget process those monies disappeared," says Kutno.

A final obstacle may prove to be found at home. Test-prep programs for poor kids will work only if parents are motivated enough to seek them out. Had Antwain remained suspended in foster care, there's little reason to think that he'd have made it to Score! even if it had been freely available through federal funding. Still, for children whose parents do take advantage, quality test prep could mean the difference between graduating from high school and dropping out.

It is a sad comment on the state of many public schools that a separate private system has to be set up to help kids master material they should have learned in the classroom. It would, of course, make more sense to fix the schools themselves. The No Child Left Behind Act may help do that, though much more will be needed, including more money and better teachers. But until the schools start doing their job, the test-prep programs offered by companies like Princeton Review and Kaplan could turn out to be the only hope that many kids have of getting through school with the basics of an education. For that reason alone, they're worth rooting for. ●

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Privatizing Propaganda

Poppy Bush and his cronies rescued Dubya's Iraq policy. Now they're saving his propaganda war.

BY NINA TEICHOLZ

ON NOV. 11, 2001, EXACTLY TWO months after the terrorist attacks, White House adviser Karl Rove traveled to what must have seemed like the heart of enemy territory: Beverly Hills. There, Rove met with several dozen Hollywood chieftains to discuss how the entertainment industry might aid the war effort, as it had during World War II.

It may be hard to recall now, but during those few months after 9/11, a nationwide spirit of patriotism really did predominate. Almost everyone, regardless of ideology, felt it important to support the president and do something for the country. The idea that Hollywood's fiercely liberal elite might work with the Bush administration did not seem utterly farfetched.

Rove pronounced the meeting "very heartening." Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, promised that his lobbying organization would coordinate the effort. Even reporters put aside their usual cynicism, concluding that the new partnership was for real. "Almost certain to emerge in the coming weeks," *The New York Times* intoned after the meeting, "are star-studded U.S.O.-style shows for troops and their families, morale-building public-service announcements on television and in movie theaters and more ambitious efforts aimed at overseas audiences and filmed in a variety of languages, trying to reinforce the American government's position that this is a war against a small group of terrorists rather than a war against Islam."

Alas, a year after the meeting, the organization created that day (dubbed the "9/11 Committee") has done little beyond producing a couple of public-service announcements. How did such a well-meaning and reasonably promising effort disintegrate? Chalk it up to the same weaknesses that have bedeviled the Bush White House on so many fronts: a fundamental lack of concern about how the world views America; an unwillingness to work with allies who won't take orders; and a tendency to mistake the agendas of industry trade groups for the interests of the nation.

Fortunately, a separate and much more successful effort, not being run out of the White House and unreported in the press, is underway to improve America's image abroad. Several dozen of Hollywood's finest talents have been hard at work developing Arabic-language movies and TV shows that could be ready for export to the Islamic world as soon as March. Directing this effort is a group of Washington luminaries that includes the president's father, George H.W. Bush, Henry Kissinger, Lawrence Eagleberger, Brent Scowcroft, and James Baker. These are, of course, the same people who helped convince the president to abandon his more hawkish advisers' plan to invade Iraq unilaterally in favor of a strategy of working through the United Nations to disarm Saddam—by all indications, a savvy policy shift. After rescuing his son's embattled Iraq policy, the elder Bush and his pals are now trying to save his failing propaganda war.

Motivating Moguls

During World War II, Hollywood produced a range of movies, from the rousing *A Wing and a Prayer* to the unsentimental *The Story of G.I. Joe*, meant to buck up the country's spirit and energize the tens of millions of citizens whose labor was needed for the war effort. Today's war on terrorism is obviously different. What this war requires is some way of lessening the extreme anti-Americanism found in many Islamic countries, a sentiment that creates the conditions terrorist recruiters depend on.

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In recent years, experts in a variety of fields have converged on the idea that the best way to persuade vast numbers of foreigners to change their minds about something is not to drop leaflets or broadcast radio news programs, but to embed the message in popular entertainment. For instance, one of the most successful humanitarian operations in Afghanistan was UNICEF's inoculation of 7 million children in just under three weeks. This was accomplished only through the extremely effective dissemination of information about the purpose and importance of inoculation through a popular soap opera on the BBC's Pashtun service.

"Throughout all of recorded history, great teachers have always known that the way to capture the attention of the audience, and get a convincing message across is through stories, humor, songs, drama, music," says Phyllis Piotrow, founding director of the Center for Communications Programs at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Or, as famed Hollywood director Sydney Pollack observed recently, "When people laugh, they're learning. When people cry, they're learning—if you do it right."

Hollywood, then, has a serious role to play in the war effort. But getting studio heads to accept it is no easy thing, as Rove learned at that first Beverly Hills meeting. Despite the initially favorable press coverage, some who attended the meeting recall a notable lack of specific commitment. At one point, Rove asked if Hollywood would be willing to do something as seemingly simple as send already-produced films to the troops overseas. "Not a hand in the room went up," recalls Craig Haffner, a documentary producer who attended. "In a room filled with people where the word introvert does not exist, the silence was ... deafening."

Why were the moguls so unwilling to help? Part of it, no doubt, was politics: the patriotic desire to do something for the country conflicted with the partisan desire to leave the room. But the bottom-line reason was the bottom line: Entertainment is a much more competitive business than the big-studio oligopoly that dominated the industry in the 1940s. Studio heads today must answer to shareholders for how they spend their money, even something as small as sending free films to the troops (which they eventually did do). Shelling out millions to produce foreign-language movies and TV shows that would almost certainly lose money was virtually out of the question. "That's just not what we do," says Rob Friedman, vice chairman and CEO of Paramount and one of the few members of the 9/11 committee willing to speak about its work. "Our jobs are to make $60 million movies and make a profit."

Of course, Hollywood is full of people who love to spend other people's money making entertainment—but corporate chieftains aren't among them. Rather, it's the creative types: directors, writers, editors, actors. The Bush administration, largely ignorant of Hollywood, didn't understand this basic sociological distinction. Instead, White House staff members relied on someone from a world they do understand: an industry lobbyist, Jack Valenti.

"We aim to show Arabs and Muslims how Americans live, breath, and work in the United States—warts and all."

Dapper, with a tanned, deeply lined face and an impressive mane of silver hair, Valenti has for decades been known as Hollywood's man in Washington, a fixer and translator between two very different worlds—someone who can get things done. But as a former aide to Lyndon Johnson, his enthusiasm for helping the Bush White House was not overwhelming. Moreover, Valenti takes his cues from the entertainment industry heads who dominate his lobby, and their desire to help Bush was equally limited. Finally, his arena is Washington, not Hollywood. "The ball got put in Jack's court. And it got turned over to marketing people in studios," says a former studio chairman and member of the 9/11 committee. "Jack is an old-time, loyal Democratic Party guy. I don't think he's that anxious to get involved with whatever this administration might do. Nor does he know how to do it."

What Valenti does know how to do is protect his turf. Before the Beverly Hills meeting Rove attended, there had been an earlier one that included (among others) actors Sally Fields and Ron Silver, conservative TV producers Lionel Chetwynd and Craig Haffner, and Chris Hennick, a deputy assistant to President Bush. "We were Americans who care about America," says Chetwynd. Yet as soon as Valenti learned of Chetwynd's liaison with the White House, the whiff of influence proved irresistible, and he pulled rank with Washington's power culture and bypassed the talent, going directly to the studio chiefs. Haffner and other TV producers say they have since met a couple of times with White House officials—but that those efforts have gone nowhere. "My feeling was that when Valenti and the studios established themselves as they did, the result—intended or not—was to push aside the legs of what was

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building under the creative community," says Haffner.

Others in the administration are trying to revive the Hollywood-Washington partnership, so far without success. Harold Patius, chairman of the State Department's U.S. Advisory Committee on Public Diplomacy, met with Valenti in early September. But so far, Valenti has put him off. "It's not that I think Hollywood has any obligation to do this stuff," Patius says. "But I think there are a lot of people in that town who are very smart and interested in politics, and this is a great opportunity for them."

Dealing with Valenti must have seemed to the Bush White House like trying to work with the French. Not surprisingly, after a few unenthusiastic attempts at diplomacy, the administration chose to go it alone. The results so far are not encouraging. The State Department's office of public diplomacy, headed by former advertising executive Charlotte Beers, has produced some public-service announcements, but these have been widely derided, and like all advertising—Beers's favored medium—depend on repetition, which is too expensive. The U.S. government's Radio Sawa, which broadcasts pop music and news, has fared better, but to date nothing has been offered in the way of television programs or movies. The administration's whole "public diplomacy" effort, rolled out with great fanfare after 9/11, seems to have stalled. Public diplomacy offices set up in London, Pakistan, and Washington to promote the U.S. point of view have been closed. The White House has yet to formally announce its Office of Global Communications, the body supposed to coordinate the entire government's public diplomacy efforts. And while a senior White House official said that Bush is "very interested in broadcast media and other new media," the administration has made no great show of lobbying for it on Capitol Hill.

A Greek Wedding for Arabs

Fortunately, one group of Washington senior statesmen does understand the importance of changing Muslim attitudes toward America and has succeeded where the Bush White House failed, brokering an alliance with Hollywood. In October of last year, Ambassador Richard Fairbanks, a special Middle East negotiator in the Reagan administration, assembled a bipartisan roster of eminences that included George H.W. Bush, Henry Kissinger, James Baker, Brent Scowcroft, George Schultz, Sam Nunn, Lloyd Cutler, and Sandy Berger, and established a nonprofit organization called Al Haqiqa ("The Truth") Television Inc. Its purpose is to create foreign-language TV programs to be broadcast in Muslim countries. From his time in the Middle East, Fairbanks had a good sense of what sort of public diplomacy would work in the region, and with introductions from Rep. Jane Harman (D-Calif.), he pulled together Hollywood talent, wisely bypassing corporate chieftains and going straight to the creative types. When Al Haqiqa first approached Hollywood, "the response was overwhelming," recalls Mark Ginsberg, Bill Clinton's former ambassador to Morocco and president of Al Haqiqa. "They said, 'We've been looking for something to do, and now you guys came in and gave us a way to do it!'"

Ginsberg winnowed down a large field to a few dozen writers, directors, and producers—including veterans of such blockbusters as *Shawshank Redemption* and *Star Trek*—who would work at a reduced rate. The group is now in the process of raising $11 million from individual donors and corporations to pay for its first year.

Currently, 10 TV programs are in the initial stages of production. One is a "Crossfire"-type news program. Another is a sitcom about a first-generation Arab-American family (think: *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* in a mosque). Another show will feature an American high school soccer team composed of Christians, Jews, Arabs, with all the attendant adolescent hijinks. "We're not doing this to propagandize. We're not exporting American democracy," says Ginsberg. "We aim to show Arabs and Muslims how Americans live, breath, and work in the U.S.—warts and all."

Because Al Haqiqa has chosen to work outside the bounds of government, it is largely free of meddling influences like Valenti's that plagued earlier efforts. The group's copious connections in the Arab world have paved the way there, as well. Al Haqiqa programming will be beamed through the Middle East Broadcast Corporation, which has the largest market share in the region and broadcasts across the entire Arabic-speaking world (120 million viewers). And, though Al Haqiqa still could face distribution problems in Muslim countries whose governments might take offense at the shows' content, Al Haqiqa's members have sterling connections in the region. The fact that their programming doesn't derive directly from the U.S. government should also increase its chances of being accepted.

If the group succeeds, it could mark an important step toward mitigating the anti-Americanism among Muslim youth that breeds terrorism. Even Hollywood luminaries skeptical of current White House bromides agree this would be a picture-perfect ending. In fact, it almost sounds like a script for a movie. Says Sydney Pollack, "In *Three Days of the Condor*, which I directed, Faye Dunaway says to Robert Redford when he's in deep trouble, 'I want you to get to know me—*fast*.' This is where we are with the Middle East today. We need to get to know them, and they need to get to know us—as fast as possible." ●

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Comparative Advantage

How economist Paul Krugman became the most important political columnist in America.

BY NICHOLAS CONFESSORE

THERE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN COLumnists who, for better or worse, commanded the greatest attention of their day. Think of Walter Lippmann during the postwar consensus, Joseph Kraft during the Vietnam era, or George Will during the Reagan years. William Safire heralded the Clinton backlash of the early 1990s, Maureen Dowd the frothy, decadent latter half of the decade. In much the same way, Paul Krugman, who has written a column twice-weekly for *The New York Times* since January 2000, is essential reading for the Age of Bush. If you work in Washington, you probably read Krugman's column, and if you read Krugman's column, you probably have strong feelings about Krugman himself. Mention his name at a Washington dinner party, and at least a few people are bound to rave—or curse.

It's not immediately clear why. Krugman is a pretty good writer, but not a great one. He's adept at explicating numbers and statistics in clear English, but he's not a stylist like Dowd or the *The Washington Post*'s Michael Kelly. Krugman isn't well-connected in Washington; in fact, he almost never leaves the environs of Princeton University, where he has taught economics since 2000. He's not a connoisseur of politics. He can't tell you how many votes John F. Kennedy won Illinois by in 1960 or who Arthur Finkelstein is. Nor is Krugman much of a reporter. There are few facts in his columns that any *Times* intern couldn't glean from documents published daily by the Congressional Budget Office or dozens of Beltway think tanks. Krugman doesn't travel around the country interviewing lieutenant governors or lard his columns with juicy blind quotes. He doesn't plot Democratic strategy like E.J. Dionne, dine with foreign dignitaries like Thomas Friedman, or write smart big-think like Ronald Brownstein. Nevertheless, for nearly two years, Krugman has been the columnist every Democrat in the country feels they need to read—and every Bush Republican loves to hate.

Krugman's primacy is based largely on his dominance of a particular intellectual niche. As major columnists go, he is almost alone in analyzing the most important story in politics in recent years—the seamless melding of corporate, class, and political party interests at which the Bush administration excels. Like most people, the Washington press, and especially pundits, were slow to grasp the magnitude of the shift. Krugman, whether puncturing the fuzzy math of Bush's tax cut or eviscerating the deceptive accounting behind Bush's Social Security plans or highlighting the corruption behind Dick Cheney's energy task force, has nearly always been the first mainstream writer to describe—and condemn—Bushonomics in plain English.

As an economist, of course, Krugman surely has an edge over most liberal pundits; his sterling academic reputation gives his critiques a punch that few Democratic politicians or liberal editorialists could hope for. But in truth, little that Krugman writes about has relied on his academic expertise. His columns aren't about trade theory or stochastic calculus, but about flagrant deceptions and fourth-grade arithmetic. What makes Krugman interesting, in short, is not just why he writes what he writes. It's why nobody else does.

Facts vs. Spin

"This is not what I do. This is not who I am," Krugman sighs. It's a week before the election, and he has invited me to his tiny, cluttered office on the fourth floor of Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School, an imposing pile of white marble that, from a distance, resembles an oversized bicycle rack. In pictures, Krugman looks self-assured, even

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a little hard-eyed. In person, he's friendly but ill at ease, a schlumpy professor in chinos and a beige button-down, who dislikes being interviewed, he says, owing to a few bad experiences with reporters. And it shows—his eyes dart nervously around the room, and every so often he rubs his face vigorously with both palms. "This is not my natural habitat. Sometimes, I think that if I had known what it would be like, I would never have agreed to do this column. What I really do is international trade and finance," he says, gesturing toward an anonymous stack of papers on one side of the room. "Professionally," he adds, "I should be worrying a lot about Brazil right now."

In truth, Krugman hasn't been a pure academic since at least the mid-1990s, when he first began writing widely for popular magazines like *Fortune* and *Slate*. But his column for the *Times* has been unusual on several counts. One is what Krugman enthusiasts might call his sense of mission. Beginning during the 2000 campaign Krugman began to write frequently about George W. Bush, and since Bush took office, the president or his administration have made an appearance in about three-quarters of Krugman's 200 or so columns. He has written especially forcefully, and especially often, about the Bush administration's plans for privatizing Social Security ("Enron-like") and Bush's now-passed tax plan ("patently, shamelessly dishonest"). Indeed, Krugman has written so many columns attacking Bush's tax cut that you could make a book from them—as, in fact, he did, publishing *Fuzzy Math: The Essential Guide to the Bush Tax Plan* in May 2001. And although Krugman can get pretty worked up—he once compared Bush to the nativist French politician Jean-Marie Le Pen—he's generally not a screamer. Rather, he writes mostly about facts, and spin: the fact that at least 40 percent of Bush's tax cut will eventually go to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans, versus the administration's spin that it was aimed mainly at the middle class. Plenty of other columnists have made these points. But only Krugman makes them in such detail, over and over again.

If Krugman's zeal is in part what makes him so appealing to liberal activists, it's also what makes him so off-putting to Republicans and conservatives—and a fair number of center-left journalists. Krugman is regularly attacked by fellow pundits, most exhaustively by former *New Republic* editor-turned-blogger Andrew Sullivan and former *Washington Monthly* editor-turned-blogger Mickey Kaus, each of whom inveighs against Krugman almost as often as Krugman inveighs against Bush. And like many partisans, Krugman can stir unruly passions. Last year, after he published an encomium to the late economist James Tobin, he received a bizarre screed from actor and game-show host Ben Stein; Stein, who majored in economics in college, accused Krugman, a likely future Nobel laureate, of having a "limited background" in the field. There are Web sites devoted to attacking Krugman's work, as well as a Paul Krugman Archive, which contains every article he has ever written, started by a high school student in New York.

For Krugman devotees, however, the main appeal is his proclivity for writing things before it is okay to write them. Journalists may love to break news, but they hate to contradict the narratives that crystallize around particular politicians or policies. Late last winter, for instance, the established storyline on California's energy crisis was that Left Coasters had only themselves to blame: the state had passed a flawed deregulation law, which led its utilities to rely on the spot energy market when prices were high. This neutral explanation came from the supposedly competent and disinterested Federal Energy Regulatory Committee, so reporters favored it. And while the press gave plenty of column inches to the Bush administration's preferred spin—that environmentalists had stymied the construction of needed generation capacity—few reporters gave credence to groups like Public Citizen, who blamed the crisis on market manipulation by energy companies, many of them based in Texas and enjoying close ties to the administration. But Krugman, noting that economists had long worried about the vulnerability of California's trading system to price-fixing, argued that market manipulation was the obvious culprit; otherwise, he wrote in March 2001, the power company executives "are either saints or very bad businessmen." Krugman was ignored at the time. Twenty months later—following the collapse of Enron, three federal investigations into the California crisis, and a passel of indictments against energy company officials—Krugman has been proved right.

More often, though, his scoops are conceptual. The tax cut, Bush's Social Security plan, Enron, the energy crisis, and Harken—all Krugman hobbyhorses—were widely covered in the media. But he has been the only prominent columnist to attempt to weave all of them into a single, continuing narrative about the Bush administration's policies, wealth inequality, corporate profiteering, and the ascendancy of crony capitalism. Many political columnists, for instance, expressed outrage and anger over the way Enron executives locked ordinary employees into Enron-only 401(k) plans while they themselves were unloading the company's stock. For Krugman, though, Enron's abuse was of a piece with the Bush approach on tax cuts: "First, use cooked numbers to justify big giveaways to the top. Then if things don't work out, let ordinary workers who trusted you pay the price."

Krugman was not, and is not, the only person in

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America who believes that the Bush administration is in cahoots with interests out to bilk Americans and pervert the political process. But as a *Times* columnist, closely read by the political elite and syndicated to papers across the country, he has been able to validate the anger of a whole class of angry, frustrated Democrats who feel that he's the only one prepared to describe the world as it really is. "He goes against the very basic thing that people and journalists want to believe about Bush: 'Say what you want, but the guy's honest,'" says James Carville, the blunt, flamboyant host of CNN's "Crossfire." "Krugman says, no—he's a complete fraud."

Capitol Pains

Krugman was born and raised on Long Island, where he enjoyed what he describes as an "utterly conventional" suburban childhood. After reading Isaac Asimov's classic *Foundation* novels, he nurtured a secret desire to be one of Asimov's "psychohistorians"—futuristic social scientists who could predict the course of human history. At Yale during the 1970s, he did the next best thing, majoring in economics under the tutelage of economist William Nordhaus. Like Nordhaus, Krugman attended graduate school at MIT; in 1977, Krugman joined the economics faculty at Yale. Within a few years, he had begun to help think through what would later be called "new trade theory," which holds that an increasing proportion of trade can be explained by technological innovation rather than countries' comparative advantage (i.e., in natural resources). Krugman's work on the subject cemented his academic reputation and launched him into the ranks of rising young stars in the field.

His first and last sojourn in Washington began in 1982, when Martin Feldstein, then chairman of Ronald Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers (CEA), invited Krugman, Lawrence Summers, and a few other whiz kids onto the CEA's staff. The early '80s recession and debt crisis had thrown Reagan's economic policy into disarray, and Feldstein had been brought in to fix things up. Working in government had two contradictory effects on Krugman. On the one hand, it induced in him a deep dislike for those he would later describe as "policy entrepreneurs"—activists and journalists, usually lacking academic credentials, who seemed to exert so much influence over economic decision-making in Washington. Feldstein was a pioneer of the supply side policies then in favor among Reaganites, who believed taxes were the most important determinant of economic growth. But unlike policy entrepreneurs such as Jude Wannisky and *The Wall Street Journal*'s Robert Bartlett, Feldstein refused to pretend that Reagan's massive tax cut could pay for itself. When Feldstein insisted on issuing accurate budget projections anticipating government deficits, and even called for a small tax increase to offset them, the administration's supply side purists attacked. (Treasury Secretary Donald Regan even urged reporters to "throw out" the council's annual report.) Like many economists, Krugman cherished his discipline's purity, and the sight of Feldstein being pummeled for not painting a rosier election-year picture was deeply disillusioning. "One thing you learn when you're working in an administration—not to mention at the Fed, where it's even more extreme—is to think three times before you speak and then bite your tongue," says Alan Blinder, the Princeton economist and former vice chairman of the Federal Reserve. "That's not how academics normally behave."

But Krugman also found that he liked writing about economic policy, and a seed was planted. The technical papers and books that he produced during the mid- and late 1980s, many of them integrating and extending his earlier work on trade theory, were notable for their creativity and number and helped set Krugman on his way to winning the John Bates Clark Medal, awarded biennially to a rising young economist, in 1991. But Krugman's late-'80s work was also less abstract than his previous efforts, drawing inspiration from real-world policy dilemmas. Eventually, at the suggestion of Michael Barker, a former Hill staffer working at *The Washington Post*, Krugman, by then ensconced at MIT, sat down to write his first book for a popular audience. *The Age of Diminished Expectations*, a kind of primer on basic economic principles as they applied to current events, was published in 1990. And while it wasn't a bestseller, the book was lucid, informative, and widely read among journalists and opin-

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ion leaders, launching Krugman's career as a bona fide public intellectual.

Very soon, however, Washington disappointed Krugman again. His writing and congressional testimony about income inequality brought him to the attention of Bill Clinton's campaign in 1992, which used some of his findings to attack the Bush administration. When Wannisky and other conservatives argued that skyrocketing income inequality was in fact a myth, Clinton's aides enlisted Krugman to help them fight the ensuing propaganda war. When he published a defense of Clinton's economic plan in the *Times* that August, it was widely assumed that Krugman would be Clinton's pick, should he win, as chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers.

Clinton did win. But his economic transition team was headed by Robert B. Reich, a Harvard lecturer, journalist, and author who had penned the early '90s other big policy tome, *The Work of Nations*. Not only had Reich tussled with Krugman over trade policy during the 1980s; he had also gone to Oxford with Clinton. Eventually, Reich became Secretary of Labor in the new administration, while Stanford economist Laura D'Andrea Tyson was named chair of the CEA. Many other economists were drafted into top administration slots, including Krugman's colleague from the Reagan days, Larry Summers. But Krugman was passed over—largely, say former Clinton officials, because he was deemed too volatile. (After clashing with fellow attendees at Clinton's Little Rock economic summit, for example, he had appeared on "Larry King Live" to declare the meeting "useless.")

Krugman didn't take the rejection well, and lashed out at Clinton's appointees. To Washingtonians, the key division on the Clinton economic team lay between the stimulators, such as Reich and Tyson, and the deficit hawks, notably Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen and budget director Leon Panetta. But for Krugman, the key division was between real economists qualified to set national policy and policy entrepreneurs, who were not. In a *Times* article that January, he was quoted as saying Tyson lacked "analytical skills"—just a few weeks after giving a speech at the annual meeting of the American Economic Association lambasting Reich and Ira Magaziner as "pop internationalists" who "repeat silly clichés but imagine themselves to be sophisticated."

Reich, Tyson, and a handful of other alleged policy entrepreneurs came in for further attack in Krugman's next book, *Peddling Prosperity* (1994). It wasn't just that they were wrong, Krugman declared. It was that they were all dangerous hacks, snake-oil salesman selling foolish remedies to credulous politicians (like Clinton). Real economists eschew policy, insulating themselves from the intellectual compromise endemic to the political world. Policy entrepreneurs, however, tend to write "in newspapers and semi-popular magazines like *Foreign Affairs*, *The Harvard Business Review*, and *The New Republic*." Moreover, the "fault line between serious economic thinking and economic patent medicine, between the professors and the policy entrepreneurs," Krugman wrote, "is at least as important as the divide between left and right."

But what was strange about *Peddling Prosperity*, as economics journalist Robert Kuttner would note in a lengthy assessment of Krugman published in *The American Prospect* two years later, was that Krugman quickly became the most prolific policy entrepreneur of them all. (Reich and Kuttner are co-founders of the *Prospect*, where I was a staff writer for four years.) By 1996, Krugman had published enough articles in *Foreign Policy*, *Fortune*, *The Economist*, *Harper's*, this magazine, and, yes, *Foreign Affairs* and *The Harvard Business Review*, to fill a second mass-audience book—*Pop Internationalism*. His defense? "What I eventually realized," he wrote in the introduction, "was that an effective answer to pop internationalism would require a new kind of writing...essays for non-economists that were clear, effective, and entertaining."

Evidently, the urgency of combating pop internationalists outweighed the dangers of popular writing, and Krugman took to his new task with great enthusiasm. *Slate* signed him up for a column, as did *The New York Times Magazine*, and he quickly mastered the form. Some of Krugman's best writing dates from this period, and he was acclaimed as the heir to John Kenneth Galbraith. His pieces in *Slate*, especially, were funny, revealing, and exceptionally fluid, if occasionally dismissive to those with whom he disagreed. As always, a good portion of his writing was devoted to debunking them—leftists who criticized the World Trade Organization, supported protectionism, and still believed in Keynes; conservatives who argued that the Dow could reach 36,000 and still believed in supply side economics.

It was largely on the strength of Krugman's writing for the *Times Magazine* and *Slate*—plus, of course, his burgeoning academic reputation—that Howell Raines, then the *Times* editorial-page editor, approached Krugman about writing a regular column. This was in 1999, at the height of the boom, and Raines felt that the *Times* needed someone who could, as Krugman puts it, "write about the vagaries of business and economics in an age of prosperity." Krugman's early *Times* column was notably less droll than his earlier writing and covered the kinds of topics he and Raines had discussed: the AOL Time-Warner merger, Bill Gates, and, when it finally happened, the stock market plunge. But Krugman still had a taste for the blood of the "hired gun"—"usually a mediocre economist," he wrote in an April 2000 column, who "has

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found a receptive audience for work that does have an ideological edge."

The Anxieties of Influence

There's a sense, then, in which Krugman hasn't changed. His writing about the Bush administration, like that about policy entrepreneurs, is primarily concerned with stupid economic policy—or at any rate, what Krugman considers to be stupid economic policy. He hasn't changed his substantive views on comparative advantage or monopolistic competition. It's worth noting, moreover, that Krugman was passed over for a Clinton economic post for precisely the qualities that make him such an effective Bush critic: His peevishness; his confidence—bordering on arrogance—in his own ideas; his lack of concern for the niceties of political or bureaucratic culture, and his resulting isolation from Washington life.

And yet something has changed. Now it's Krugman's work that cuts with an ideological edge. To read through his columns about Bush is to watch disdain pass through frustration into rage. The first few, written during the 2000 campaign, are dismissive; how could anyone take what this guy is saying about his budget seriously? But a few weeks before Election Day, Krugman was getting impatient. "I really, truly wasn't planning to write any more columns about George W. Bush's arithmetic," he wrote in an October dispatch. "But his performance on 'Moneyline' last Wednesday was just mind-blowing." In the space of a few minutes, he noted, Bush had made three major misstatements—about how much he had promised to spend on prescription drugs for seniors, about how much of the surplus his tax cut would eat up, and about whether Social Security got a better "return" than bonds. "What is really striking here is the silence of the media—those 'liberal media' conservatives complain about," Krugman lamented. "As I said, I don't want to keep writing about this. But reporters seem to be too busy chasing rats and dogs to look at what the candidates say about their actual policy proposals." The same went for Bush's Social Security proposal. "It just was not acceptable to report Bush's plan straight," Krugman told me recently, "to assert that it *requires* a large influx of money from someplace to make it work."

Even after Bush became president, it's clear that Krugman saw Bush's deceptions as more joke than threat. In particular, Krugman, like many people outside and inside Washington, didn't believe that the Bush administration would persevere with the tax cut in the face of a deepening slump. But as Bush and his lieutenants did just that—and more infuriatingly, began to offer an endlessly changing, and often contradictory, set of explanations and numbers to defend their plan—Krugman's writing changed. He no longer wrote about policy hustlers of the left and the right; instead, he began to devote the majority of his columns to the Bush administration. His tone was more angry, less wry. During the campaign, Raines had forbidden him to use the word "lie" when describing Bush's proposals, even the demonstrably mendacious Social Security plan. Now Krugman used it with gusto. "Mr. Bush was lying [during the tax cut debate]," he wrote in August 2001. "It was obvious from the start that the administration's numbers didn't add up. And in case you were wondering, the administration is still lying."

"There's been a kind of missionary quality to his writing since then," muses Princeton's Blinder. "He's trying to stop something now, using the power of the pen." But that's not all. The change is deeper: Krugman now takes politics seriously. As Kuttner puts it, "The interesting thing about Krugman is that he was a mainstream neoclassical economist who was moderately liberal as a citizen, but tended to look at politics as an illegitimate distortion of the perfection of the market economy. He viewed the left and the right as symmetrical evils. Krugman has now discovered *power*."

Krugman seems to agree. "I think we were all living in a fool's paradise in the late 1990s. There probably wasn't as much energy in my criticism of the right. I was wrong, obviously," he says. "If I'd understood where politics would be now, it would have been quite different. I thought that Reich and Magaziner were proposing bad ideas, but that's not the same as being frightened of where they might be taking us. We can have arguments about trade policy later. Now I'm frightened."

White and Wrong

Krugman has also discovered that when you're the center of attention and you make a mistake, people notice. The most serious error was in a column written last July about Bush's dealings with the Texas Rangers, of which he became a part-owner in 1989. It's well known that Bush put $606,000 into the syndicate that bought the Rangers in 1989, about 2 percent of the total cost. When the deal was initialized that same year and Bush became the team's general manager, the syndicate awarded their well-connected partner an additional 10 percent stake, gratis. When the team was sold in 1998, Bush earned $14.9 million on his original investment. But Krugman went further, charging that Bush's extra return was "a 12-million dollar gift" to "a sitting governor," when in fact the gift had been awarded years before Bush's election as governor in 1994. Krugman later admitted the error—on his Web site, but not in the *Times*.

In a column about Army Secretary Thomas White, Krugman, citing a report by reporter Jason Leopold in

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the online magazine *Salon*, wrote that shortly after White knew of Enron's impending losses, he wrote an email to another executive "Close a bigger deal. Hide the loss before the 1Q." White, charged Krugman, was an "evil-doer." But two weeks later, after White told the *Times* he couldn't "recall" writing the email in question, *Salon* took the story off their site, and after re-examining Leopold's evidence, neither *Salon* nor the *Times* could authenticate it. In his next column, Krugman apologized for the mistake. But not before he was roundly pilloried for repeating the quote, even more so than *Salon* for printing it. "Krugman Comes Clean" wrote Andrew Sullivan on his Web site, as though Krugman had been involved in some kind of cover-up.

Both columns involved major errors—one sloppy, one more understandable. (If columnists re-reported every article they ever cited from reputable magazines, we wouldn't have op-ed pages.) But it is a measure of the nerve Krugman touches that his mistakes draw vastly more criticism than the same or worse sins committed by other columnists. In a November *Times* column, for instance, William Safire declared it an "undisputed fact" that 9/11 terrorist Mohammed Atta had visited an Iraqi agent in Prague, even though investigations by the CIA and by the Czech intelligence agency—not to mention reams of reporting by Safire's own paper—had determined that no such meeting had ever taken place. Later, Safire changed his mind, calling his assertion "a hunch," but not an error—and nobody, save MSNBC columnist Eric Alterman, called him on it. But Safire isn't the only one. During the Enron scandal, according to the Web site Spinsanity.org, nearly 20 pundits, reporters, and columnists repeated the myth that Ken Lay had stayed in the Lincoln Bedroom during the Clinton administration; only about half of them issued corrections. Likewise, many liberal columnists—Michael Moore, Robert Scheer, even *The New Yorker*'s Hendrick Hertzberg—wrote that the Bush administration had given $43 million in aid to the Taliban prior to 9/11, when in fact it was $43 million worth of foodstuffs and food security delivered to Af-ghans through the United Nations. Yet few of these errors sparked anything close to the reaction that Krugman's have.

Pages of Sin

On balance, Krugman's record stands up pretty well. On the topics he writes about most often and most angrily—tax cuts, Social Security, and the budget—his record is nearly perfect. "The reason he's gotten under the White House's skin so much," says Robert Shapiro, a former undersecretary of commerce in the Clinton administration, "is that he's *right*. None of it is rocket science."

So if dismantling the façade of lies around, say, Bush's tax cut is so easy to do—and makes you the most talked-about newspaper writer in the country—why don't any other reporters or columnists do it themselves? Because doing so would violate some of the informal, but strict, rules under which Washington journalists operate. Reporters usually don't call a spade a spade, unless the lie is small or something personal. When it comes to big

Who's Who

By Susan Threadgill

The Democrats' midterm pasting has put a crimp in the presidential plans of the party's "six pack": **Al Gore, John Kerry, Joe Lieberman, John Edwards, Howard Dean**, and **Richard Gephardt**. Gore and Dean can plausibly call themselves "outsiders" and avoid being tainted by the loss. But the rest are scrambling to explain why they'd fare any better in 2004 than a circa-1984 **Walter Mondale** (or '02, for that matter). Democratic insiders speculate that the more lightweight packers, like **Bill Clinton** protégé Edwards, might benefit from a stalwart **Dick Cheney**-type, skilled in matters of national security and foreign policy. One name that's surfaced: *Monthly* contributor, and former NATO Allied Supreme Commander, Gen. **Wesley Clark.**

Of all the things you'd expect retiring Sen. **Jesse Helms** (R-NC) to fight for in the final weeks of his 30-year tenure, Internet radio probably wouldn't be one of them. But Helms, whose Web site was voted one of the worst in Congress last year, blocked a House bill sponsored by Rep. **James Sensenbrenner** (R-Wisc.) to reduce the royalty payments Webcasters must pay to the recording industry, arguing that the proposed rates are still too high. Skeptics say that Helms's concern doesn't lie with downloading **J. Lo**'s latest single, but with religious programming. But Webcasters favoring songs by **Christina Aguilera** over ones about **Jesus** are nonetheless thrilled by Helms's opposition.

Dick Gephardt may be gone, but Democrats on the Hill say that rumors of Democratic National Committee chairman **Terry McAuliffe**'s demise are greatly exaggerated. Though most Democrats winced at McAuliffe's pro-

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policy disagreements, most reporters prefer a he-said, she-said approach—and any policy with a white paper or press release behind it is presumed to be plausible and sincere, no matter how farfetched or deceptive it may be.

Similarly, among pundits of the broad center-left, it's considered gauche to criticize the right too persistently, no matter the merits of one's argument. The only worse sin is to defend a politician too persistently; then you become not a bore, but a disgrace to the profession and its independence—even if you're correct. Thus, in Washington circles, liberal *Times* columnist Bob Herbert is written off as a predictable hack, while *The New York Observer*'s Joe Conason, who vigorously defended the Clintons during the now-defunct Whitewater affair, is derided as shrill and embarrassing. Obviously, conservative columnists and pundits aren't quite as averse to being persistent or shrill. But center-left journalists do not, to put it mildly, take their cues about what's acceptable practice from conservative pundits.

That's because liberal journalists and conservative journalists have different value systems. Most liberal pundits—E.J. Dionne, Ronald Brownstein, or Maureen Dowd—came up through the newsroom ranks, a culture that demands shows of intellectual independence from politicians, especially Democrats. Many conservative pundits, on the other hand—Safire, Tony Blankley, or Peggy Noonan—come straight from political careers, a culture that encourages intellectual fealty and indulges one-sidedness. Krugman is not a journalist by training, and he's never held appointive or elective office. But like conservative pundits, he doesn't feel bound by the niceties that professional reporters do. Hence the discomfort with Krugman's methods among center-left journalists.

"He is obviously a very smart guy, basically liberal, with complicated views, who once recognized when his own side was wrong. And at some point he switched and became someone who only sees what's wrong with the other side, in fairly crude terms," says Mickey Kaus. "The Bush tax cut is based on lies. But it's not enough to criticize a policy to say that it's based on lies. You have to say whether it's good or bad for the country." True, Kaus is probably Krugman's most vociferous non-right-wing critic. But even among those journalists and politicos who enjoy his column, it's not uncommon to hear the comment that Krugman might be a little more effective if he were just a little less rabid. "It is considered the appropriate thing to say at a dinner party that, while Krugman is very bright, he's just too relentless on Bush," drawls James Carville. "Because to accept Krugman's facts as right makes the Washington press look like idiots."

These days, however, there's a good market for journalists willing to be a little relentless when it comes to the Bush administration. Of course, Krugman, like any good economist, knows that in most markets the biggest profits come from having some sort of monopoly. But monopolies don't endure; competitors always arise. Right now, when it comes to analyzing the intellectual underpinnings of the Bush administration, Krugman has no competition. But as is usually the case, it might be better for everyone else if this particular monopoly didn't last. ●

nouncement to **Larry King** that election night had been "a good night" for the party, most believe he's staying put because Bill and **Hillary Clinton** still back him.

Steve Hildebrand is the rare Democratic operative whose stock actually rose after the midterm elections. With all the Democrats' Senate losses, the most unlikely result was the hairsbreadth victory of Sen. **Tim Johnson**, the freshman senator from South Dakota who managed to eek past **Karl Rove**'s hand-picked GOP challenger, **John Thune** in one of the most pro-Bush states in the country. Hildebrand made his name as a master of the ground operation when he ran Iowa for **Al Gore** in 2000. And when Johnson and his Senate colleague **Tom Daschle** started putting together a campaign team last year they knew they'd need the best talent they could get. The team they put together—including a number of other veterans of Gore 2000—was widely recognized as including some of the best talent in the Democratic Party today, including Deputy Campaign Manager **Mark Nickolas** and Communications Director **Dan Pfeiffer.** And it paid off on Nov. 5 when Johnson edged out Thune by little more than 500 votes.

Plenty of Republicans are due praise, but a few stand out: **George W. Bush**'s stealth pollster **Jan van Lohuizen** had a perfect night (pending the runoff in the Louisiana Senate race). His firm, Voter Consumer Research, is five-for-six: winning clients included Kentucky Sen. **Mitch McConnell**, North Carolina Sen.-elect **Elizabeth Dole**, Florida Rep. **Ric Keller**, Rhode Island Gov.-elect **Don Carcieri,** and Kentucky Rep. **Anne Northup**. If **Anne Terrell** somehow upsets incumbent Democratic Sen. **Mary Landrieu** in the Louisiana runoff the first Saturday in December, van Lohuizen will have a perfect score. Another popular GOP pollster will be **Bill McInturff**, who helped engineer upsets for **Norm Coleman** in Minnesota and **Saxby Chambliss** in Georgia.

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Unnecessary Evil

China's Muslims aren't terrorists. So why did the Bush administration give Beijing the green light to oppress them?

BY JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

THE TERRORIST ATTACKS OF SEPTEMBER 11, and the Bush administration's response to them, have unsettled much of the world. But few places have been more profoundly—and negatively—affected than Xinjiang, an obscure province in China's far northwest. Though the name is Chinese, most of the people who live in this Texas-sized swath of rugged mountains and high deserts are Uighurs: Turkic-speaking Muslims, more culturally akin to the Azeris of Baku than the Han Chinese of Beijing.

As in Tibet, the Chinese government has spent decades trying to pacify the land of the Uighurs (pronounced WE-gerz) with a mix of political repression and colonization by Han Chinese. The drab green uniforms of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) have long been a common sight on the province's streets. But since September 11, the Chinese government has sent in 40,000 PLA reinforcements. On a recent visit to the desert city of Hotan, I watched newly arrived Han Chinese soldiers running wind sprints along the side of the road, a practice that the locals in Hotan—where summer midday temperatures top 110 degrees—surely regard as lunacy. In the provincial metropolises of Kashgar and Urumqi, Chinese police patrols wander the streets and lounge conspicuously at the upscale hotels where local Chinese dignitaries gather.

With the beefed-up military presence has come increased cultural and political oppression. During the Muslim festival of Ramadan in 2001, some Uighurs were forbidden to fast and thousands of Uighur-language books were burned in massive rallies throughout the province. More than 3,000 Uighurs reportedly have been secretly jailed since 9/11, and many have been executed for no given reason. Xinjiang province, as Craig Smith recently noted in *The New York Times*, remains the only place left in China where people are routinely put to death for purely political disagreement. Resentment toward the Beijing government, and indeed toward ethnic Chinese in general, now simmers just below the surface in many Xinjiang households.

The growing repression in Xinjiang is part of the dark side of the Bush administration's response to September 11. By declaring war not just on al Qaeda but also on terrorism generally, the president gave rhetorical cover for other leaders to ratchet up the repression of their own terrorist-infiltrated sub-populations. Ariel Sharon and Vladimir Putin have famously exploited this. But at least Israel and Russia face real, immediate terrorist threats. China faces nothing of the kind from the Uighurs. By any honest reckoning, Xinjiang, though hardly quiescent, is not the hotbed of Islamic militancy that China claims.

Nor are the Uighurs remotely a threat to the United States. Yet in September, the Bush administration declared that a hitherto-unknown Uighur separatist group had ties to al Qaeda. Though there is virtually no serious evidence of such connections (the charge came primarily from the Chinese government), the Bush administration added the group to its terrorist list in the hopes of winning Chinese cooperation in the wider war on terrorism and support for (or at least acquiescence in) an invasion of Iraq. For a critical but still uncertain level of support in the war on terrorism, Washington has given the Chinese government the equivalent of a human rights get-out-of-jail-free card. And China is playing that card ruthlessly.

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Little Istanbul

Without setting foot on the ground in Xinjiang it is difficult to grasp how unlike the rest of China this region really is. The scenes I saw walking through the provincial capital of Urumqi reminded me of Istanbul or Amman, not of any city in eastern China. In the city's central market, where Turkish pop music drifts out of a nearby music store, young Uighur men, with their broad, Turkic/Central Asian faces, milled about in long robes and Muslim skullcaps. Nearby, older Uighur women in headscarves and long, flowery frocks sat at tiny streetside cafes, pulling apart dense, Middle Eastern-style sesame bagels. At the entrance to the market, kebab sellers frantically fanned their charcoal grills and cut pieces of shwarma, while dried-fruit vendors hawked their wares at the top of their lungs. Inside, smiling carpet merchants pawed at my arm, inviting me into their stalls to sip tea and view pomegranate-dyed rugs, the Uighurs' most famous handicraft.

In Kashgar, Muslim women run businesses and wear long but sheer dresses, while a young crooner belts out electrified rock versions of traditional melodies.

A week later, I touched down in Kashgar, one of the major centers of Uighur culture, and home to the Idh Kah mosque, one of the largest religious structures in China and a hotbed for traditional music. As I walked around the outskirts of the mosque, I saw Uighur lute strummers congregating for impromptu performances. That evening, I experienced another permutation of local melodies at a nightclub, watching a young Uighur crooner belt out electrified rock versions of haunting traditional songs. As the music for each tune began, Uighur diners would take to the dance floor in droves, circling their partners with one hand flamboyantly raised above their heads in a style that reminded me of parties in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. Uighur culture is traditional but evidences none of the harsh repression of women found in many Muslim countries. Uighur women run businesses, walk the streets in long but still sheer dresses, and interact with men as equals; two teenage girls I met vowed that they would never marry anyone who did not love them.

In almost every respect, the real Xinjiang is a very different place from that which Beijing portrays to the world—and which all too many in Washington have accepted. Though there are Islamist groups in Xinjiang, the real issue is regional autonomy, the struggle of a religiously and ethnically distinct people to resist domination by Beijing and annihilation by the country's dominant ethnic group, the Han Chinese.

Twice during this century, the Uighurs of Xinjiang, a province which encompasses nearly one-sixth the area of China, actually did declare independence. After the last Chinese dynasty collapsed, the Uighurs established independent republics of East Turkestan (a common Uighur name for Xinjiang) in 1933 and, again, in 1944. But the 1944 republic was abolished when Mao's Communists took power in 1949, and Xinjiang was incorporated into China. From the early days of Communist rule, Beijing attempted to establish stronger Chinese control over Xinjiang, primarily through resettlement policies. The policies worked: While only 300,000 Han lived in Xinjiang in 1949, more than 8 million Chinese now live in the province, out of a total of roughly 19 million residents. But in the late 1970s and 1980s, as Deng Xiaoping opened China's economy, Beijing relaxed its grip, allowing significant economic and sociopolitical liberalization in Xinjiang.

After the 1989 Tiananmen riots and several incidents of violent Uighur separatism in the early 1990s, Beijing backed away from sociopolitical liberalization in Xinjiang. Some of the separatist incidents were indeed frightening—including a rash of bus bombings in Urumqi and assassinations of local government officials. But Beijing's reaction went too far. The government reasserted control over all religious institutions and accused thousands of Uighur writers of "advocating separatism," a broad term which often means little more than producing works in the Uighur language. Hundreds of artists were jailed and reportedly tortured. The security services also incarcerated prominent Uighurs who might have served as effective advocates for Xinjiang autonomy, men and women such as Rabeya Kadeer, a leading businesswoman whose husband lives in America.

Uighur Smear Campaign

An already bad situation deteriorated rapidly after

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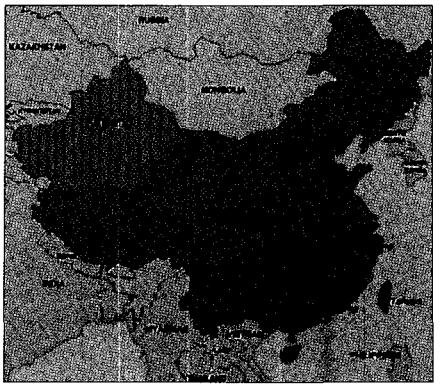
September 11. Shortly after the al Qaeda attacks on America, China began a massive propaganda campaign designed to convince its citizens, the international media, and foreign countries that the small number of Uighur separatists who do exist had trained in Afghanistan and developed close ties to al Qaeda. Less than a month after the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Sun Yuxi announced that "efforts to fight East Turkestan [i.e. Uighur] terrorist forces should become part of the international efforts [against terrorism.]" Senior Chinese ministers accused Uighur groups of "belonging to the bin Laden clique" and charged that over 1,000 Uighurs had migrated together to Afghanistan to train in al Qaeda camps. Chinese government flacks took journalists on closely-monitored tours of the region. The PR specialists alternatively touted Xinjiang as an ideal tourist destination—still a long shot, given that tour guiding in the province consists largely of screaming at clients and pushing them from place to place—and telling hair-raising stories of terrorists waiting around each corner. Most farfetched, Beijing prepared a detailed report which alleged that bin Laden had pledged large sums of money to fomenting Islamic rebellion in Xinjiang, an assertion American terrorism experts discount completely.


Xinjiang is a province in China's far northwest.

Like the assertion about bin Laden's cash, Beijing's allegations about Uighur ties to global terror find very little substantiation. There is political violence in Xinjiang, but it tends to be isolated and rooted in local ethnic and socioeconomic tensions. Small numbers of Uighurs may have fought for the Taliban against the United States, and there are allegations that a handful of captured Uighurs are cooling their heels at Guantanamo Bay. But in a comprehensive report released last fall, Human Rights Watch demonstrated that Beijing's claims that Uighurs belonged to international Islamist networks probably were spurious, since Uighur leaders are extremely distrustful of the ethnic Pashtun Taliban and of Arabs. Eyewitness interviews with Uighurs captured by the Northern Alliance suggested that they had come to Afghanistan on an individual basis.

What's more, despite a few small separatist incidents, most Uighurs not only reject violence but also probably do not wish to split from China. In fact, notes Dru Gladney, an expert on Xinjiang at the University of Hawaii, the serial economic collapse of neighboring Central Asian states has convinced many Xinjiang residents that to strike out on their own would be disastrous. "Xinjiang was one of the first provinces allowed to have private businesses when China began to open its economy, so they have experience with capitalism and, despite the political repression, have benefited from economic reform," says Gladney. Indeed, most Uighurs I met in Kashgar were aware of the massive economic problems in Central Asia—traders from the region frequent Kashgar's huge Sunday market—and realized their best economic option was to remain in China.

Instead, argues Nicolas Becquelin, a Xinjiang specialist based in Hong Kong, most Uighurs reject fundamentalism and merely want the autonomy to control their religious institutions, attend schools taught in Uighur, and get a fair shake in the Chinese economy. Even the few Uighur groups openly supporting independence, such as the East Turkestan National Congress, which operates from bases in foreign countries, have advocated creating a secular, democratic government in Xinjiang and have explicitly condemned al Qaeda. Protestations about democracy are not uncommon for rebel groups that later impose more authoritarian regimes. But radical Islamists are usually rather open in criticism of secularism. And, in any case, the East Turkestan National Congress has consistently denounced violence in Xinjiang.

Beating around the Bush

What has George W. Bush, who so frequently claims that religious freedom is an issue dear to his heart, done to defend the Uighurs, perhaps the most pro-U.S. Muslims in the world? Not much. The State Department's most recent "Country Report on Human Rights" harshly criticized China for its treatment of the Uighurs, and many American officials privately acknowledge that Beijing has not substantiated its claims about al Qaeda ties to Xinjiang. President Bush also has told Chinese leader Jiang Zemin how important the Bible is to him and has mentioned that the war on terror should not provide an excuse to persecute minorities. According to media reports, Jiang was "impressed" by Bush's commitment to his faith, though apparently not impressed

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enough to alter his gruesome policies towards religious minorities.

The Bush administration has done little to back up its words. When Ronald Reagan visited Moscow in 1988, as the Soviet Union, like China today, was confronting serious internal tensions, he gave a major public speech about freedom and human rights. Unlike Reagan, Bush has not used visits to China to seriously highlight concerns about repression in Xinjiang or even bargain for the release of a leading Uighur like Kadeer. Instead, the president has praised Jiang for standing "side by side" with the United States in the war on terrorism.

Untold numbers of innocent Uighurs will end up with bullets in the back of their heads as a direct result of U.S. action.

Even the State Department, which has taken a relatively tough line on China, has backpedaled, its officials recently arguing that some "credible reports"—namely, Beijing's assertions—had described that Uighurs trained in al Qaeda camps. And on a recent trip to Beijing, intimidating Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage did not just soft-pedal America's criticism. Armitage thrilled Beijing by announcing that Washington had placed one obscure Uighur separatist group, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, on America's official list of terrorist organizations. Never mind that the group is virtually unknown and that most independent experts on Uighur matters are unconvinced that it exists.

Beijing Fling

Washington does seem to have reaped some rewards from its concessions to Beijing. China recently passed new statutes aimed at controlling exports of missile technology, chemical weapons, and other weapons of mass destruction. China has also stayed out of Washington's way as the United States has pursued its campaign in Afghanistan. And the Chinese appear willing to forgo using their Security Council veto power to block an invasion of Iraq.

But China's cooperation is easy to exaggerate. Although Beijing appears to have given help in some areas—allowing, for instance, the FBI to open a branch office in Beijing—diplomats say China has offered little substantive assistance to the anti-terror effort, sharing only limited amounts of its intelligence with either the FBI or the CIA. In an appearance before the House International Relations Committee, Colin Powell admitted as much, stating that the United States "didn't get much of a response" from Beijing.

What's more, while Beijing has signed accords on controlling exports of weapons of mass destruction, it has failed to curb its exports of dual-use technology. Chinese state-linked firms reportedly continue to sell chemical and biological weapons components to Iran, which is allegedly actively expanding its arsenal of such weapons and attempting to build a nuclear bomb. Eight Chinese companies have been barred from doing business with the U.S. government and may be slapped with further sanctions. (China has denied these allegations of assisting proliferation.) Chinese state-run companies also reportedly continue to provide advanced missile components to China's longtime ally Pakistan, which uses this technology to build missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads. And Pakistan in turn is suspected of providing weapons of mass destruction technology to North Korea, the country which recently shocked the world by admitting it was developing nuclear weapons.

In some respects, China is actually hindering the war on terrorism and a potential war with Iraq by stoking the fires of anti-Americanism. Party-controlled media companies have produced popular videos glorifying the September 11 attacks. In one video, a camera focuses on the rubble of the World Trade Center, while over the image, a commentator remarks: "Blood debts have been repaid in blood ... This is the America the whole world has wanted to see."

This campaign against the United States has continued even after Washington gave Beijing its green light to crackdown in Xinjiang. In fact, it's continued even in Xinjiang. Imams in the province have been rounded up and forced to attend "re-education sessions" laced with anti-American propaganda—reels of news footage of hate crimes against American Muslims. This anti-American campaign serves two purposes. It

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strengthens Chinese nationalism, which Beijing relies on as adherence to communism wanes. And since the United States has over the past decade welcomed some Uighurs and other refugees from China, the Uighurs have become among the world's most pro-American Muslims. Beijing does not want imams broadcasting human rights abuses in Xinjiang to Uighur-American organizations, and it hopes to prevent this possibility by demonizing the United States.

In addition, despite China's various anti-American actions, many China experts believe Beijing would have gone along with the war on terror and the potential campaign against Iraq even if Washington had not given Beijing carte blanche to repress the Uighurs, arguing that former President Jiang Zemin would have supported or at least abstained on the Afghanistan resolution even if the United States had not lobbied Beijing, since, after 9/11, China did not want to be viewed as hindering the war on terror. According to this view, Jiang, who is approaching retirement, wants to be seen as a statesman, not a pariah, in order to maintain his influence at home and abroad as he loosens the reins of power. Indeed, before the recent Bush-Jiang summit in Crawford, Texas, he took pains to emphasize the "growing interdependence" of the United States and China.

In addition, the argument that China needed much convincing to jettison Iraq should be viewed skeptically. Though Beijing has been outwardly friendly to Baghdad over the years, China does not get a significant portion of its oil from Iraq, and Chinese leaders have often expressed concern about Saddam's intentions. Indeed, toppling Saddam might even help Beijing's main petroleum providers, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Minor Threat

Yet even if we grant that turning our backs on the Uighurs was a cruel but necessary price to be paid in the service of the war on terror—and there are good arguments to be made—it is folly to believe that price

Beijing's Long Arms

By Soyoung Ho

JANET XIONG IS AN AMERICAN citizen living in New York. Thousands of miles away from China, she didn't think she had to worry about the Communist Party's crackdown against Falun Gong. She was wrong.

In October 1999, three months after the Chinese government stepped up its repression of the spiritual movement in response to a series of peaceful demonstrations against Communist Party persecution, Xiong's apartment was broken into and ransacked. Drawers were opened. Documents and files were scattered. Yet nothing was taken. A year later, police in China detained some of Xiong's American friends—fellow Falun Gong practitioners—and questioned them about her role in the movement. The police told them that they knew about practitioners in the United States and listed off names including Xiong and her husband. "I'm being watched," said Xiong, still remembering the chill she felt that day. "I also received phone calls threatening me to stop Falun Gong."

There are an estimated 100 million Falun Gong practitioners—a movement based on elements of Taoism and Buddhism—more than 65 million of whom are members of the Communist Party. To date, 100,000 adherents have been arrested, detained, or sent to labor camps, and more than 500 have been killed. On July 7, 1999, after Chinese President Jiang Zemin delivered a speech to the Politburo on the need to eradicate Falun Gong throughout the world, China reportedly expanded its crackdown overseas—especially in the United States, home to some 2.4 million ethnic Chinese.

There are roughly 10,000 practitioners in the United States, including the movement's founder Li Hongzhi, who is wanted in China. China accuses Falun Gong of being an "evil cult" that brainwashes adherents to commit suicide and refuse medical treatment. Western China experts, however, say that what the Communists really fear is a large civil-society-based group existing outside the Party's control or supervision. James Seymour, a China scholar at Columbia University, says Chinese authorities fear large, well-organized groups. "This comes partly from their own sense of insecurity and partly from their understanding that such movements have historically overthrown dynasties," says Seymour.

Last April, in response to harassment in the United States, 50 Falun Gong practitioners, including a number of American citizens, filed a groundbreaking civil rights lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, accusing China's security ministries, its embassy, and various regional consulates of conducting a criminal campaign designed to systematically intimidate, injure, and suppress U.S. adherents of Falun Gong.

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won't be steep. The first to pay will be untold numbers of innocent Uighurs who will end up with Chinese bullets in the back of their heads. To be sure, some of this repression would have happened no matter what Washington did. And it is precisely during times like these, when an authoritarian regime is experiencing a potentially destabilizing change of leadership, that you'd expect a crackdown. Still, there is no escaping the fact that some measure of the suffering of the Uighurs is a direct consequence of American policy.

It would be one thing had our decision in China been an isolated case. But it's not. As Peter Maass recently documented in *The New Republic*, the Bush administration has tacitly (and not-so-tacitly) pressured many authoritarian regimes, from Pakistan to Egypt, to crush their own Islamic militants by any means necessary. This is undoubtedly an effective way to get rid of terrorists bent on killing Americans. But sanctioning state terror to stamp out non-state terror will quickly reach a point of diminishing moral returns. And sanctioning state terror against civilian populations who have little or nothing to do with terrorism crosses a pretty clear moral line.

It also puts the United States itself at risk. Since America so often gets blamed in the Muslim world for wrongs and trespasses with which it has nothing to do, there's little doubt that our quite real indifference to the repression of largely pro-U.S. Muslims in Xinjiang will stoke new resentments, the results of which we can't pretend to predict.

Geopolitics and war are not always pretty, and any nation, for its own safety, must at times make cold-blooded decisions that cause suffering and resentment in other countries. But the Bush administration has shown such astounding disregard for the anger and outrage its actions inspire in the world that it's hard to have confidence in the wisdom of its strategic and moral calculations. Time will tell if the license Washington has given Beijing to crack down on the Uighurs was a cruel necessity of war, or just plain cruel. ●

According to the suit, the home of another vocal American practitioner, public relations executive Gail Rachlin, was broken into three times between July and October 1999; only an address book containing Falun Gong contact information was taken. In other cited cases, practitioners claimed that hired thugs had emerged from Chinese consulates and embassy buildings to threaten or beat them while they were distributing literature and protesting China's crackdown. Vehicles have been broken into; pamphlets have been destroyed; a car filled with Falun Gong literature was firebombed; phone conversations have been wiretapped; and practitioners' relatives in China have been threatened.

The crackdown in the United States has also included pressure on U.S. government officials and businesses, which, though not illegal, is a clear attempt to subvert American standards of tolerance and religious freedom. Chinese consulates pressured city and state governments to revoke proclamations on behalf of Falun Gong. In October, Houston-area hotels suddenly cancelled reservations made by practitioners who flew in to protest Jiang's visit with President Bush. The Chinese Consulate in Houston denied any involvement, and the hotels claimed they simply overbooked, or admitted that they didn't want any disturbances. In another incident, the Chinese Consulate in New York City sent an open letter to all Chinese newspapers in New York, urging that Falun Gong be banned from marching in Lunar New Year parades. Asked about the incident, press secretary Tang Win of the Chinese Consulate in New York gave the standard denial: "We never get involved; there is no connection."

The Chinese Embassy denies that it is seeking to crackdown on Falun Gong in America and dismisses the lawsuit as groundless. "It's rubbish; it's fabrication of Falun Gong," said Chen Ligang, counselor of the embassy, who also disputes the U.S. court's jurisdiction, citing the Vienna Conventions rules which, he claims, bar individuals from suing foreign governments. (International law experts believe China will eventually have to respond to the suit in the U.S. courts.)

Nevertheless, the U.S. government is beginning to take notice of the harassment. Tom Reynolds, an official in the FBI's civil rights unit, confirmed that he received reports of harassment against Falun Gong practitioners last summer, but would not confirm or deny that an official investigation was underway. A bill introduced by Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-Calif.), currently before Congress, calls on China to stop interfering in the exercise of religious and political freedoms in America, such as the right to practice Falun Gong, and calls on the Bush administration to investigate reports of illegal acts committed by Chinese consular officials against practitioners in the United States.

SOYOUNG HO *is a* Washington Monthly *intern.*

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War Dames

If America invades Iraq, thousands of female U.S. soldiers will fight on the front lines.

BY PHILLIP CARTER

LAST FEBRUARY, AS THE SUN ROSE over a parched California desert, tanks from the 4th Infantry Division's 1st Brigade reached a large enemy minefield. Their orders were to secure a hilltop in the enemy's rear area. But until combat engineers could clear a path, the tanks would be sitting ducks for nearby tank and artillery fire. And without cover, the engineers would likewise be pinned down.

At the prearranged moment, a column of armored smoke vehicles commanded by Capt. Streigel of the 46th Chemical Company threaded its way cautiously forward, laying down a thick haze to mask the engineer teams. In less than an hour, the engineers had opened a gap and 1st Brigade moved through to its objective, thanks to the precision teamwork under fire of Streigel's soldiers and the other ground units.

Like most battles at the National Training Center, this one was hard—the closest approximation to combat that the Army can create in peacetime and a rigorous test for the military's newest tactics and equipment. As war looms with Iraq, these training exercises, along with others taking place in the Louisiana swamps and on the German plains, assess combat skills before the real bullets start to fly. The California exercise in particular was a good indicator of how American soldiers will fight a war against Iraq—and also how much has changed since the Gulf War. Over the last decade, the Army has digitized its equipment, upgraded its tanks, and added capabilities like peacekeeping to its mission, all part of a sustained, high-profile effort to adapt to war in the 21st century.

But one quieter transformation was also on display in the desert: Capt. Streigel—first name: Jennifer—is a woman. Ten years ago, Streigel could never have commanded a front-line chemical company in the U.S. Army. But the next time the United States goes into battle, women will be as close to the front lines as any infantryman. During its minefield operation, Streigel's company fought shoulder to shoulder with the combat engineers and deployed more armored vehicles than a tank company—and four of its five officers were women. In fact, Streigel is just one of thousands of women who, since the Gulf War, have been steadily migrating to assignments that place them at or near the line of battle.

Since the Gulf victory in 1991, a series of largely unnoticed policy changes have opened new opportunities for women to fight alongside, and even to lead, front-line troops. The Navy and Air Force, with some fanfare, allowed women into the cockpits of fighters and bombers. But less well known is how vastly the Army has expanded the role of women in ground-combat operations. Today, women command combat military police companies, fly Apache helicopters, work as tactical intelligence analysts, and even

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serve in certain artillery units—jobs that would have been unthinkable for them a decade ago. In any war in Iraq, these changes could put thousands of women in the midst of battle, far more than at any time in American history.

This new role for female U.S. troops is the product of three different forces. One is congressional pressure to integrate the military by gender as it previously had been integrated by race. Another is the ongoing enlistment shortage; the military remains reluctant to admit women yet is unable to recruit enough competent men to staff an all-volunteer Army. But the most important reason has been pressure from women within the Army who need combat experience to advance their careers, nearly all of them in the officer corps. And yet this experiment has been conducted largely below the threshold of public awareness.

The wisdom of this integration is sure to be tested in any sizable ground war with Iraq. If female soldiers perform poorly, they could put their comrades' lives at risk, strengthen the hand of conservatives who oppose women serving as soldiers, and provoke a backlash from the American public. But if, in the heat of battle, women fight bravely and effectively, it could spark a different sort of debate among the military and the public at large over why regulations and military culture still conspire to keep women from many prime assignments in the nation's service.

Foxes and Foxholes

The history of American women's role in combat is a brief one. Before the Vietnam War, only a small number of women served in uniform, primarily in medical specialties and occasionally as rear-echelon intelligence officers or as pilots of transport aircraft. That began to change in the mid-1970s with the advent of the all-volunteer army. No longer able to rely on a steady stream of draftees, Army recruiting experts expanded the number of specialties open to women.

The first women entered West Point in 1976. Upon graduation, they were allowed to pursue most career fields, but by law precluded from those "combat arms" specialties that would place them on the front lines. This was done for two explicit reasons. The first is the importance the military places on "unit cohesion." Integrated units, some theorists have argued, would destroy the teamwork crucial to combat performance. Male soldiers would become distracted and compete for women's attention, and would grow demoralized if women were killed or wounded. "No unit can afford to have two people in love with another," says Dr. Anna Simons, a professor at the Navy's Postgraduate School who has written extensively on Special Forces and believes that gender integration would have a disastrous effect. "Forget the sex—this is about the clouding of judgment. No matter how close the friendship is between men, it still doesn't jeopardize their decisions the way that love does."

The second, more empirical reason is the physical disparity between male and female soldiers. Put simply, many military jobs require high levels of strength that most women just don't have. "You can't just let women into [infantry units]," argues Elaine Donnelly, a former member of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services who now chairs the Center for Military Readiness, a conservative group that opposes women in combat. "Lowering the standard like that for the infantry would be fatal."

Thus, in the 1970s, the Army employed a "risk rule" to determine whether a job would be open to women—literally measuring how close to battle any given assignment might require a soldier to be and barring women from those in which the likelihood was high. This kept women from a wide swath of assignments, and restricted opportunities even within fields they could legally enter, like the military

Female combat medics in training at Fort Hood, Texas.

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police or intelligence, since almost every type of unit in the Army (even support units) could theoretically see combat. As a result, women could only be assigned to headquarters or other rear-echelon units at overwhelmingly low combat risk.

Street Fighting Women

But the American invasion of Panama in 1989 exposed the risk rule as largely ineffective. In several widely reported instances, female soldiers participated in firefights with Panamanian Defense Forces or local militia. Support units that included women took fire and returned it under conditions that any veteran would describe as "combat." When rear areas become combat zones, every soldier is expected to grab a rifle. Women wound up fighting under conditions that would have earned them the Combat Infantryman's Badge had they been men and assigned to an infantry unit. Female convoy drivers were ambushed, and returned fire. Female helicopter pilots flew into battle zones, landed American infantry, and picked up casualties under heavy ground fire. Women assigned to military police units conducted infantry-style missions to cordon off and search Panamanian neighborhoods for enemy guerrillas—the same type of street fighting that could take place in Baghdad.

The Gulf War, too, featured an innovation in American military strategy that pushed the risk rule toward obsolescence: "maneuver warfare." This doctrine dictated that support units should push as far forward as possible to provide greater logistical aid to units in combat. The Army used this strategy with stunning success against the Iraqis. But since many U.S. support units were of mixed gender, women wound up serving farther forward in the Gulf War than ever before.

Some criticized women's performance in Iraq, pointing to ships and ground units with high pregnancy rates—even organized prostitution rings—as examples of women's harmful effect on unit cohesion and morale. There have also been charges of standards being lowered to let women into combat positions, such as at least one high-visibility aviation accident with a female pilot in 1994 who, critics charged, had been rushed into the cockpit to ensure that a politically motivated proportion of women earned their wings. But there were too few female pilots at the time for any meaningful studies to be conducted, and more recent reports from the air campaigns in Kosovo and Afghanistan indicate that women pilots performed as well as men, and, in some cases, even better.

Indeed, during the Gulf War, critics' worst predictions proved unfounded: Women did not flee combat in disproportionate numbers, nor did their units collapse under the stresses generated by their presence. The military consensus is that most women performed well. And various studies of mixed-gender units have shown that cohesion was not a problem—both in exercises at the National Training Center and in actual combat. (The critical variable in unit cohesion proved to be not gender, but such differentials as the unit leader's time in command and the length of time the troops had spent together.)

The presence of female troops *did* create something of a bureaucratic nightmare. Before units could leave for the Gulf, hundreds of women had to be transferred out for administrative reasons. Some were pregnant and thus ineligible for combat deployment. But many others were transferred out because their commanders were unsure whether the risk rule permitted them to be taken into combat. Likewise, many women had problems arranging for childcare during their deployments, especially in families where both parents served. In most such situations, commanders ordered the men to war and found ways to transfer or discharge the women. But all these problems revealed more about the ambiguity of the risk rule—and the military's ability to accommodate soldiers with children—than it did about women's fitness for combat.

Major Mom

While the Panama and Gulf engagements put female soldiers to the test, other pressures were building. Many female officers who had joined the service in the 1970s were complaining by the 1980s that the long roster of restrictions was limiting the range of command posts they could be assigned to. Because getting ever bigger and better command assignments is the key to military promotion, they rightly felt their careers were being unfairly stymied. "Women can make sergeant major with a lot of hard work and no combat experience; they can't make general as easily," observes Charles Moskos, a sociologist at Northwestern University who has studied the military for 30 years. As a result, it's largely female officers who have pushed the liberalizing of women's combat roles.

In response to the Gulf War, the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services moved to open up a wide range of mil-

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itary occupations to women. When Bill Clinton became president, the committee's more activist members and their allies in the military found a kindred spirit in the White House. Suddenly, high-level Pentagon officials were more receptive to recommendations for opening combat roles to women. Key members of Congress, who had watched women perform well in the Gulf, were also more supportive. Through their efforts, Congress repealed the combat exclusion laws in 1992. Two years later, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin revised the risk rule in favor of a "Direct Combat Probability Code" ("DCPC" in Pentagon-speak) that measured risk more narrowly—by unit, not by geography—and created thousands of new opportunities for wo-men by allowing them into all positions but those most likely to see ground combat: the "trigger-puller" front-line formations such as infantry, armor, artillery, and Special Forces.

As it happened, the trigger-pullers saw most of the action in Afghanistan. But if the United States invades Iraq, women will play a far wider role than ever before in any ground offensive. Female chemical officers will lead the way through contaminated areas; female engineer officers will help direct any efforts to bridge the Euphrates; female helicopter pilots will shuttle the infantry into and out of combat areas during any assault.

Army policy still forbids women from being assigned to combat units at the battalion level and below. (A battalion contains 300-500 soldiers and is likely to be very far forward.) But women can serve in infantry, armor, artillery, and other units at the brigade level and higher—the units directly behind combat battalions on the battlefield—as well as support units like military police and aviation that often work alongside combat units. Recent changes in Army practices and policies include, for example, formally assigning female lieutenants to mixed-gender brigade headquarters while informally attaching them to all-male combat battalions, as the Army does at Ft. Hood, Texas. Why? Because the shortage of male lieutenants is particularly acute in specialties like chemical warfare and intelligence.

Since 1995, the Army has also experimented with a new organizational design for its combat units, transferring many support positions from all-male combat units to mixed-gender support units. Consequently, large numbers of fuelers, medics, and mechanics who now support the fighting arms are women—a change now spreading through the rest of the Army, including the reserves, that will potentially shift thousands of women farther forward on the battlefield than ever before.

Women's recent migration into combat roles has received little scrutiny, largely because we haven't fought a big ground war since the Gulf.

Violent Femmes

So why hasn't anyone noticed women's new roles in combat? One reason has been reluctance among uniformed officers to criticize policies related to race or gender for fear of imperiling their careers by appearing politically incorrect. But more positively, the Army has had relative success in making the shift, leaving journalists with little bad news or controversy to report. (And truth be told, many female soldiers would rather the press ignore their gender and treat them like any other soldier.) The Army, moreover, has greatly improved its handling of gender issues, especially since Bosnia and Kosovo. One example is a reduction in the kind of family support problems that plagued the Gulf War deployments. "It used to be that the deployment child-care plans of many men and women were convenient fictions—the Army ensures that they're much better now," says Dr. Laura Miller, an expert on military culture and gender issues at the RAND Corporation.

The biggest reason why women in combat haven't received more scrutiny, though, is that America has not fought a major ground war since the Gulf, or incurred major casualties since Vietnam. But if the United States launches a ground war against Iraq, hundreds or even thousands of female soldiers are likely to see combat a variety of ways.

One is street fighting, which often degenerates, as it did in Panama, into house-to-house struggles without battle lines or safe areas. Any action in, say, Baghdad or Basra could escalate into the kind of mayhem not seen since the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, where U.S. Marines fought for weeks to retake the bitterly held city of Hue. In their roles as truck drivers, MPs, signal specialists, and aviators, women

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would fight alongside men in the cities of Iraq. If there is one area likely to inflict significant casualties, upon men and women alike, this will be it.

Then there's the Euphrates. Any effort to cross the river would necessarily include bridging, chemical units, and military police units, all of which include female officers and soldiers. In river-crossing operations, those "support units" actually lead most of the action, with infantry and armored units supporting them. Female engineers would actually drive the boats and build the bridge to get our forces across the river. Similarly, female combat-support soldiers would be critical to any effort to breach Iraqi defenses. Female helicopter pilots may undertake reconnaissance ahead of any American infantry, or deposit troops to scout out strongpoints on the ground. Chemical-warfare specialists like Capt. Striegel would accompany engineer units as they opened paths through Iraqi defensive positions.

And since women now serve in every major battalion-level command post—as intelligence officers, chemical officers, logistics officers, MPs, and signal officers—they will be in the heat of battle. Even rear areas would not be safe. In the first Gulf War, Saddam Hussein's SCUD missiles struck American bases as far back as Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. In a fight to the death, Saddam may unleash his entire arsenal upon soft American targets—possibly with chemical warheads.

A successful showing by female soldiers in Iraq is sure to increase pressure on the Army to end the subtle day-to-day discrimination that remains a fact of life for many female soldiers.

Weight Watchers

No one is quite sure how Americans will respond if significant numbers of women are killed in Iraq. "The real issue is, if greater numbers of women get captured, how will the country react?" asks Donnelly. "We would have to desensitize the entire nation to violence against women. Endorsement of women in combat means an endorsement of violence against women at the hands of the enemy." Perhaps. But even when women have died in combat, the public hasn't questioned their reasons for being there. The nature of public grief for soldiers like Marine Corps Sgt. Jeannette L. Winters, a radio operator who was the first female military casualty in the war against Afghanistan, may indicate that Americans will accept female casualties if they believe in the cause they're fighting for.

In the end, what will really determine public reaction is how well women perform their jobs under fire. On the ground in Afghanistan, women did not participate in the main actions of Operation Anaconda. But since the fighting died down, female MPs have gone out on long infantry patrols with the 82nd Airborne Division, and by most indications performed well. To be fair, they have not seen combat, and haven't performed the most physically demanding tasks the military has to offer. But women have covered 10 to 20 miles of very hard country per day carrying loads of up to 75 pounds, all while living in close quarters with male infantry.

And so far, as in the Gulf, the worst predictions have not come true—no reports of mass pregnancies or other issues have come to light in Afghanistan. "I'm learning what grunts do, [and] they learn what I do. As MPs, we search people and look for weapons ... I never thought we would be walking for hours or be on the front," MP Sgt. Nicola Hall told a reporter in Afghanistan after the mission. "[The 82nd Airborne soldiers] have been nothing but respectful to us; as long as you walk, carry your own weight and don't whine, you're respected."

Indeed, if mixed-gender units perform as they have in the California desert—and in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan—it would strengthen the integrationist trend in several ways. The least likely possibility would be the elimination of all rules barring women from full combat service, from special forces to light infantry. But even if this were to happen, surveys suggest that only a small number of women would apply. And only a fraction of those who do would have the physical ability and fortitude to make it through, say, the crucible of Army ranger school, from which a majority of qualified men wash out before graduation.

The second, and more likely, possibility is that certain combat jobs currently off-limits to women

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would be opened. For instance, women can currently serve in Patriot air-defense units, but not in short-range air-defense or offensive artillery units closer to the front—even though the skill levels are virtually the same. Female soldiers frequently win the Army's highest awards for marksmanship and even participate on the U.S. Olympic marksmanship team—but outside the MPs cannot be snipers. If Saddam's Baathist regime falls to U.S. forces that include women, these kinds of job limitations may collapse, too.

Finally, a successful showing by female soldiers is sure to increase pressure on the Army to end the subtle day-to-day discrimination that remains a fact of life for so many female soldiers, from anachronistic "wives clubs" in some units to assignment policies that place a premium on female soldiers willing to defer childbearing indefinitely.

General Improvement

Even if more opportunities for women open up, the changes are unlikely to be as radical or disruptive as many imagine, for a simple reason: Not that many women are likely to take advantage of the opportunities. A recent RAND Corporation study indicates that women have not flooded into every new specialty opened to them during the 1990s. Some, such as Army bridge crewmembers, have seen an increase. But the number of, say, female Marine Corps F-18 pilots has not really changed. This is true in part because the services still make it difficult for women to enter these occupations by setting quotas that limit their number. But it is also because of a lack of interest. According to a RAND survey, while more than 75 percent of military women supported the general idea of women in combat, only 10 to 15 percent of those said they would actually pursue such jobs if given the option. "Enlisted women are much less keen on rushing off to combat than female officers," observes Northwestern's Moskos.

In other words, even in the event that the Army opens combat jobs to women, those opposed to the idea may not have much to worry about. And besides, the more women like Capt. Streigel who serve bravely and effectively in an upcoming Iraq war, the more female generals we'll see a few years down in the road—and the more likely the issue of women's role in the military will work itself out.

The Washington Monthly's Monthly Journalism Award

Joel Kurth, Jennifer Chambers & Delores Patterson

"Painkiller Drugs Scarce For Poor"

The Detroit News, October 27, 2002

Having surveyed 200 retail pharmacies in the Detroit area, the reporters discovered that pharmacies in poor, urban areas are less likely than their suburban counterparts to stock commonly prescribed medications for long-term pain. The *News* found that only 20 percent of urban pharmacies surveyed stocked the severe-pain palliative OxyContin, while the drug appeared on 87 percent of suburban pharmacy shelves. Results also showed significant discrepancies in the availability of Percocet and morphine. Some urban pharmacists said they feared that stocking the expensive, highly coveted drugs would make them targets for robberies. The reporters also suggest that, because the drugs are so popular among illicit users, doctors are hesitant to issue prescriptions and pharmacies are reluctant to fill them. And while experts decry yet another disadvantage for citizens of low-income neighborhoods, those in need of the drugs have only one concern: relief.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005. Or e-mail us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com. Nominations for stories run in November 2002 are due December 5, 2002.

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Tidbits & Outrages

UFO: "UNUSUAL FORMER OFFICIAL"?

Former Bill Clinton chief of staff John Podesta has joined with the Sci Fi Channel in calling on the government to declassify secret records on UFOs. Podesta supported the move "to provide scientists with data that will assist in determining the real nature of this phenomenon."

Bean Polls

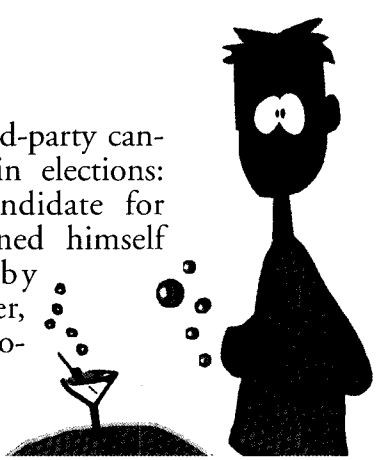
Liberal candidates weren't the only ones to get creamed at the polls. Berkeley, Calif., voters rejected a measure to mandate "politically correct" coffee, which would have forced business to serve beans grown in environmentally friendly conditions—or face up to six months in jail.

Watch your back, Terry McAuliffe

Few would call her politically astute, but Democratic diva Barbra Streisand fared better on Election Day than most pundits. Streisand campaigned for three Senate candidates: John Kerry of Massachusetts, Max Baucus of Montana, and Alex Sanders of South Carolina. Only Sanders lost. Nevertheless, Streisand's protege and pen pal, House Minority leader Dick Gephardt, resigned.

He's Locked Up the Smurf Vote

Perhaps it's no wonder third-party candidates don't fare better in elections: Montana's Libertarian candidate for governor accidentally turned himself blue—permanently—by drinking colloidal silver, which he believed would protect him against disease.



Great Shakes

New Mexico Governor-elect Bill Richardson didn't coast to victory last month on his Clinton administration credentials alone. The former energy secretary conducted his get-out-the-vote effort practically single-handedly. That would be his right hand: Richardson broke the Guinness World Record by shaking 13,392 hands in an eight-hour period, besting President Theodore Roosevelt's 1907 effort of 8,513.

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Bright Lights, Small Villages

Why helping Africa get solar power is good for America.

BY NICHOLAS THOMPSON AND RICARDO BAYON

IN MOST WAYS, PATRIENSA IS JUST ANOTHER tiny town amidst lush farming land in the Ashanti region of Ghana: a remote part of a remote country where per-capita income is less than a dollar a day. The day starts when the rooster crows and ends at about 9 p.m., when everyone has finished eating their pounded yams and plantains.

To Osei Darkwa, however, Patriensa is the ideal place to build a technological metropolis. A calm, jovial man who isn't sure whether there are 20 or 30 people living in his house, Darkwa was born in Patriensa, educated in Norway, and able to make a little bit of money working as a professor at the University of Illinois. Now he's come back and is currently building a giant telephone, Internet, and health center, with a radio station and potential data-processing facility for foreign companies to boot. Already, he has shipped hundreds of old computers from the United States, set up computer literacy courses, found donated hospital beds, and even promised space to an indigenous healer and her potions. He's currently maxing out his American credit cards and cajoling friends and fellow villagers to give free labor and donate land. "It's just a sacrifice for a better tomorrow," he says.

But one thing is stumping him right now: power. The telecenter lies too far away from Ghana's national power grid to receive any electricity, so Darkwa, who needs lights to build his metropolis, has set up solar cells on his roof. Funded partially by an American non-governmental organizations, Greenstar, the cells provide enough power for basic lighting and about five computers. Darkwa would like to do more, but he doesn't have the money to buy further cells; getting electricity from the grid means wading and bribing his way through a corrupt and convoluted bureaucracy.

At first blush, it may not be clear that Darkwa's problem should concern anyone outside Patriensa. But although most Americans couldn't even find Ghana on a map, the energy choices of this small African country, together with those of millions of other people in the developing world, will ultimately affect the environmental, economic, and energy prospects of all Americans. If Darkwa and those like him—some 2 billion energy-starved people around the world—decide to power their televisions and refrigerators with coal and oil, the eventual environmental meltdown will affect every place on earth.

But if wealthier nations can help a large part of their poorer brethren turn to clean and renewable energy, the air will be a lot cleaner, there will be less pollution and poverty, and new trading markets will develop—and the price of oil may even drop. In other words, the United States shouldn't help Darkwa go green merely for his sake, or just because it's a nice thing to do. We should help Darkwa go green because it is profoundly in our own interest.

Power Gridlock

It may sound far-fetched to ask poor rural communities to adopt solar and renewable energy before rich developed countries. But in fact, solar energy makes vastly more sense in Patriensa than it does in Philadelphia. Americans tend to take electricity for granted. You can buy a hair dryer, plug it in, and turn it on just about any-

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where, thanks to a "grid" of generating stations, power lines, and transformers that enmeshes the entire country.

But that grid is the product of hundreds of billions of dollars of government subsidies and private investment over the years. In developing countries, by contrast, fully functioning grids tend to be limited to urban areas, are usually nearing obsolescence, or cannot keep up with demand. Most places lack any grid at all. And even if poor countries had the money or inclination to build grids—most have more pressing worries—bringing electricity to small rural villages like Patriensa wouldn't be at the top of their list. As ESKOM, South Africa's largest utility, has discovered, extending the grid to serve a few households often costs significantly more than providing the same village with solar power, and so it has begun to install solar energy in hard-to-reach communities on a monthly-fee basis.

Even where government-built grids are available, there's often a further problem: the government itself. In many developing nations, state-owned or -run utilities are corrupt and unreliable. In Ghana, for example, the one-third of the population that does have access suffers through periodic blackouts, energy spikes, and capricious policies such as a recent 60 percent increase in electricity taxes. The country largely relies upon a single giant dam. When rainfall is low, electricity is low. When a 1998 drought inflicted rolling blackouts, students at the country's top university clustered underneath solar-powered street lamps just off campus to study for their exams.

Solar power and other decentralized sources of energy can help get around these problems. Mobile phones in Africa, Asia, and Latin America provide a hopeful parallel. For decades, people in developing nations had to put up with expensive and poorly designed telephone networks controlled by corrupt and inefficient bureaucrats. But over the past five years, entrepreneurs have built cellular-phone networks that, in effect, circumvent the national telephone system. Five years ago, Ghana didn't have mobile phones. But as a U.N. task force recently discovered, more cell phone connections have been turned on in Africa in the last five years than land-line connections in the past century.

Solar Power to the People

Another reason why solar makes more sense in rural Ghana than downtown D.C. is, simply, competition. In the United States, renewable energy has to compete with highly efficient, cheap, subsidized, and easy-to-find fossil fuels. Burning coal may melt icebergs, but in America it's inexpensive and widely available. Additionally, in the United States we have already invested in the infrastructure needed to transmit electricity from central generating stations to wherever it is needed. So while it costs approximately 2 cents a kilowatt hour to generate electricity from coal, solar energy still costs about 10 times that amount. Of course, solar energy is getting cheaper every day, and burning coal carries long-term health and environmental costs. But in the short term, it makes the most economic sense.

In much of the developing world, on the other hand, burning fossil fuels for electricity doesn't make economic sense—even in the short term—because it would mean investing heavily in infrastructure, transmission capabilities, and generating facilities. (Not to mention the annual costs of buying the necessary fuel.) In other words,

Photo by Nicholas Thompson

Three boys outside their home in Timber Nkwanta.

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for much of the developing world, clean energy competes only with energy generated by burning extremely inefficient, expensive, and difficult-to-find fuels. For these people, solar power would cost less over the long term than what they spend now collecting or buying firewood, kerosene, candles, and dry-cell batteries. In Morocco, for instance, "more than half of the people who live off-grid already spend close to $100 dollars a year" on such fuels, notes Vikram Widge, a renewable-energy expert at the International Finance Corporation, the private-sector arm of the World Bank. "Meanwhile, a solar home system of 50 watts—enough to run two or three light bulbs, an electrical outlet, a TV, and maybe a fan—costs about $550 but has an estimated lifetime of 20 years."

It may sound far-fetched to ask poor rural communities to adopt solar and renewable energy before rich developed countries. But in fact, solar energy makes vastly more sense in Patriensa than it does in Philadelphia.

In Timber Nkwanta, another Ghanaian village experimenting with solar energy, villagers already pay about 20 percent of their income for kerosene and batteries, not to mention the countless hours spent carrying firewood on their heads from increasingly remote forests. In a recent study, the International Energy Agency found that this figure compares to as little as 2 percent of household income paid for energy in countries like the United Kingdom. In the long term, solar is a cheaper option, and it's healthier, too. The World Health Organization estimates that 2.5 million people die prematurely each year in the developing world from inhaling biomass burnt indoors—deaths that could be averted in many cases through the use of cleaner energy sources.

So why aren't more developing-world villagers using solar power? The main obstacle isn't income, but access to financing. Though the world's poor can and often do pay for energy on a month-to-month basis, it's difficult for them to amass the small amounts of capital needed to pay for renewable energy systems upfront. A common problem in many developing nations is that no one is quite sure who owns a given plot of land—which deprives would-be entrepreneurs of the most common form of collateral for loans. In many cultures, particularly those where poverty has been a way of life for centuries—most of Africa for example—the notion of saving up money is unheard of; as soon as someone has accumulated a bit of cash, he's often expected to share it with the rest of the community. And, of course, most people are living day-to-day and hand-to-mouth. Both Widge and Phil LaRocco, head of a New Jersey-based company that provides support and seed capital for energy entrepreneurs in developing countries, say that the key to getting solar into developing countries is to use financial products geared to the poor. Credit guarantees, small loans via agricultural banks, micro-credit, and the like can lengthen the short time horizons against which the poor generally make their everyday energy decisions.

Light Up My Life

If the United States can help provide financial tools and incentives to change that short-term mindset born of necessity and bring power to the world's poor, the benefits would be enormous. Electricity—from whatever source—does much more than bring light to a village. It allows people to irrigate their farmland, refrigerate their vaccines, and run their machines. It allows them to work later, pump water, watch TV and perhaps, eventually, connect to the Internet. Widespread access to power can lead to fundamental changes in how people work, trade, and farm, setting the stage for a global surge in development. "People don't have power because they are impoverished," says Nana Yaw Boakye Asante, the CEO of a private Ghanaian solar company, Terrasolar. "But they are impoverished in part because they don't have power," he says.

Electricity could also have a profound impact on local demographics. One of the greatest problems in Africa is the mass migration of young men away from their farming villages and toward major cities. They go there in search of excitement and electricity—in both a figurative and a literal sense. What they usually find, of course, is unemployment and wretched poverty. That isn't good for them, and it generally isn't good for us; one more man selling pineapples on a city street corner means one less man growing pineapples for export.

It might also mean one more person with AIDS. When young men migrate to the cities, they often visit

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prostitutes, contract AIDS, and bring it back to their families and villages. Research shows that this is a key vector for AIDS in a continent where homosexual sex and blood transfusions are relatively rare. Having electricity in their villages wouldn't stop such migration completely, but it would make a difference. "If they just had TV and radio here, they might stay," argues J.K.N. Budu, the chief of Timber Nkwanta. "And then there wouldn't be just old men and women working on the farm."

But there are also potential benefits to the United States. Increased access to electricity means a greater demand for televisions, VCRs, and stereos—not to mention CDs and videos. "If we don't develop new energy markets," says LaRocco, "where are future purchases of U.S. DVDs going to come from?"

More directly, if developing countries rely mostly on traditional energy sources as they grow, they will begin to compete with the United States for oil and gas. China, for instance, currently uses coal for about 70 percent of its energy needs. But by 2030, estimates the International Energy Agency, China's demand for oil will equal that of the United States, making it a strategic buyer on world energy markets. The emergence of China as a new "energy giant", says the IEA, will have an impact on the energy security of all other energy-consuming countries. And, depending on how India's economy grows, it too could one day compete with the United States for imported oil. Simple economic theory indicates that as the demand for a commodity increases (assuming that supply remains stable), so too will its price. In other words, by helping developing countries adopt solar and wind energy, the United States may be helping hold down its own oil bill.

The main benefits to the United States from clean energy in the developing world are, however, environmental. While global energy use is expected to grow at an average rate of about 1.7 percent per year in the decades to come, it will likely increase more than twice as fast in developing ones, and even faster than that in China. Over the coming decades, China and India will need to provide energy to millions of peasants who, like those in Timber Nkwanta, are miles away from the nearest electrical line. If China and India meet that demand by expanding their grids and burning more coal—both have plentiful coal supplies—and biomass, the resulting pollution will make the brown cloud that has been stifling parts of Asia this year look like cigarette smoke on a windy day. But with some help from the international community, it would be cheaper to provide solar electricity to these multitudes than to extend grids to reach them—and better for the environment, too.

Then there's the problem of climate change. If China and India—not to mention Africa, the rest of Asia, and Latin America—expand their energy consumption via a traditional fossil fuel-based energy path, they will quickly overtake the United States as the leading emitters of greenhouse gases, frustrating any hope of preventing the predicted climatic upheaval which would spare no country: Munich Re, the world's largest reinsurance company (which provides insurance to the world's insurers and, therefore, bears the risk of large catastrophic events like earthquakes and storms), has estimated that even a mild degree of climate change could cost the world more than $300 billion a year in lost crops, increased storms, droughts, hurricanes, and other calamities.

"My worst fear," says Kevin Baumert, a senior associate at the World Resources Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based environmental group, "is that the United States continues to shirk its responsibilities on climate change and that, partly as a result, developing countries begin using energy and polluting at U.S. levels. That would be an unmitigated disaster."

Got a Light?

To prevent this nightmare, the developed world needs to help the developing world get over the initial hump of setting up solar and other forms of renewable energy. Some people and institutions have already taken the lead. For example, Widge and his partner, John Forster, say the IFC is working with local banks in Morocco, India, and Kenya to provide affordable loans for solar energy in off-grid, rural locales. They've spent only about $19 million dollars so far, but the money seems to have had a substantial impact and they report that they are beginning to uncover a huge pent-up demand for solar energy. This squares with our experience in Timber Nkwanta, where the villagers seem to consider their solar-powered lights as gifts from the gods.

And the vastness of this market is not lost on the world's solar energy technology sector. "Clearly this is a very promising area of potential business for us," says Todd Foley, spokesperson for BP Solar, the U.S.-based subsidiary of the mammoth energy company British Petroleum, which has now become one of the world's largest producers of solar cells. "Of the 2 billion people in the world without power, we think that maybe 1 to 1.5 billion will find that solar is the best and most economically competitive option." Of that total, he adds, about a quarter can already afford solar and the rest could get it if they only had some

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form of government subsidies or credit.

And BP has already taken steps to tap into it. Last year it signed a $48-million-dollar contract to bring solar energy to some 400,000 households in the remotest parts of the Philippines. What is interesting about this project, however, isn't only that it constitutes an important source of business for BP, but also that the financing came from the Spanish government. Bilateral and multilateral aid, says Foley, must be involved for this business to develop. Thus, by supporting renewable energy projects in the developing world, the United States can simultaneously help the global poor and support a budding solar-energy industry.

There are two easy ways that the United States can help bring renewable energy to the developing world. One would be a massive aid grant to create clean sources of energy for the Third World; the other would be to push the World Bank to vastly enlarge its budget for projects such as Widge and Forster's. But neither seems likely, given America's aversion to foreign aid and its current foreign-policy priorities: The United States today provides almost as much military aid to Israel as it does all forms of aid to all of sub-Saharan African.

A more realistic approach would be to tie debt relief to the use of clean energy. For the last two years, thanks in part to high-profile advocates like U2's Bono, debt relief has been gaining ground in U.S. policy circles. Everyone now agrees that unsustainable levels of public, private, and multilateral obligations are dragging down the developing world: Overall debt per person owed by developing countries to developed ones is about $500—more than annual per-capita income in most of Africa. And while nobody really expects poor countries to pay off their debts, simply servicing those debts shackles many third-world governments. So why not set this debt against clean-energy development? The result could be a win-win-win situation: Developing countries would benefit, renewable energy businesses in the United States would benefit, and the global environment would benefit.

Innovative conservation organizations have had more than a decade's worth of experience organizing debt-for-nature swaps; experience that could serve as a model for "debt-for-clean-energy swaps." For example, the Tropical Forests Conservation Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in 1998, allows the U.S. government to forgive debts owed to it by other governments in return for investments in forest conservation. The countries get to pay back their debts at reduced rates, in local currency, for activities that help them develop. The United States gets something it considers valuable in return for debt that may never have been recovered at all.

The legislation, which has received support from both parties and President Bush, is expected to channel more than $250 million into conservation in developing countries over the next three years. A similar bill could do the same—or more—for renewable energy development. Ghana's government, for example, could buy Darkwa his solar cells, whereupon the United States could forgive an equivalent amount of debt.

Asked about such exchanges, Terrasolar's CEO, Nana Yaw Boakye Asante, jumps and says that's exactly what Ghana needs. "It's staring us in the face," he says, looking at the sun and wiping away the sweat from yet another 90-degree day in what is supposed to be the country's cool season. "We're at the center of the earth in latitude and longitude. There's lots of sun. And the sun doesn't move. It's always there." With a little help from the United States, its energy could be as well. ●

Photo by Nicholas Thompson

Nana Yaw Boakye Asante, Timber Nkwanta residents, and one of their village's new solar panels.

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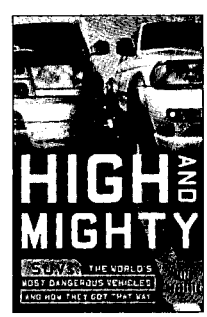
Bumper Mentality

Americans buy SUVs to feel safer. They should buy life insurance, too.

BY STEPHANIE MENCIMER

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY sport utility vehicle drivers seem like such assholes? Surely it's no coincidence that Terry McAuliffe, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, tours Washington in one of the biggest SUVs on the market, the Cadillac Escalade, or that Jesse Ventura loves the Lincoln Navigator. Well, according to *New York Times* reporter Keith Bradsher's new book, *High and Mighty*, the connection between the two isn't a coincidence. Unlike any other vehicle before it, the SUV is the car of choice for the nation's most self-centered people; and the bigger the SUV, the more of a jerk its driver is likely to be.



HIGH AND MIGHTY: SUVs—The Most Dangerous Vehicles and How They Got That Way
by Keith Bradsher
Public Affairs, $28.00

According to market research conducted by the country's leading automakers, Bradsher reports, SUV buyers tend to be "insecure and vain. They are frequently nervous about their marriages and uncomfortable about parenthood. They often lack confidence in their driving skills. Above all, they are apt to be self-centered and self-absorbed, with little interest in their neighbors and communities. They are more restless, more sybaritic, and less social than most Americans are. They tend to like fine restaurants a lot more than off-road driving, seldom go to church and have limited interest in doing volunteer work to help others."

He says, too, that SUV drivers generally don't care about anyone else's kids but their own, are very concerned with how other people see them rather than with what's practical, and they tend to want to control or have control over the people around them. David Bostwick, Chrysler's market research director, tells Bradsher, "If you have a sport utility, you can have the smoked windows, put the children in the back and pretend you're still single."

Armed with such research, automakers have, over the past decade, ramped up their SUV designs to appeal even more to the "reptilian" instincts of the many Americans who are attracted to SUVs not because of their perceived safety, but for their obvious aggressiveness. Automakers have intentionally designed the latest models to resemble ferocious animals. The Dodge Durango, for instance, was built to resemble a savage jungle cat, with vertical bars across the grille to represent teeth and big jaw-like fenders. Bradsher quotes a former Ford market researcher who says the SUV craze is "about not letting anything get in your way, and at the extreme, about intimidating others to get out of your way."

Not surprisingly, most SUV customers over the past decade hail from a group that is the embodiment of American narcissism: baby boomers. Affluent, and often socially liberal, baby boomers have

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embraced the four-wheel-drive SUV as a symbol of their ability to defy the conventions of old age, of their independence and "outdoorsiness," making the off-road vehicle a force to be reckoned with on the American blacktop. But as Bradsher declares in his title, this baby boomer fetish is considerably more harmful than the mere annoyance of yet another Rolling Stones tour or the endless commercials for Propecia. In their attempt to appear youthful and hip, SUV owners have filled the American highways with vehicles that exact a distinctly human cost, frequently killing innocent drivers who would have survived a collision with a lesser vehicle. Bradsher quotes auto execs who concede that the self-centered lifestyle of SUV buyers is apparent in "their willingness to endanger other motorists so as to achieve small improvements in their personal safety."

SUV drivers tend to be insecure and vain, nervous about their marriages and parenting skills, and less likely than most Americans to go to church or do volunteer work, according to market research.

After covering the auto industry for six years, Bradsher is an unabashed critic of sports-utility vehicles and the automakers that continue to churn them out knowing full well the dangers they pose. He doesn't equivocate in his feeling that driving an SUV is a deeply immoral act that places the driver's own ego above the health and safety of those around him, not to mention the health of the environment. Ironically, and though most supposedly safety-conscious owners don't realize it, SUVs even imperil those who drive them.

Road Rodeo

Ask a typical SUV driver why he drives such a formidable vehicle, and he'll invariably insist that it's for safety reasons—the kids, you know—not because he's too vain to get behind the wheel of a sissy Ford Windstar. Automakers themselves know otherwise—their own market research tells them so. But Bradsher makes painfully clear that the belief in SUV safety is a delusion. For decades, automakers seeking to avoid tougher fuel economy standards have invoked the fiction that the bigger the car, the safer the passenger. As a result, most Americans take it on faith that the only way to be safe on the highway is to be driving a tank (or the next best thing—a Hummer). Bradsher shatters this myth and highlights the strange disconnect between the perception and the reality of SUVs.

The occupant death rate in SUVs is 6 percent higher than it is for cars—8 percent higher in the largest SUVs. The main reason is that SUVs carry a high risk of rollover; 62 percent of SUV deaths in 2000 occurred in rollover accidents. SUVs don't handle well, so drivers can't respond quickly when the car hits a stretch of uneven pavement or "trips" by scraping a guardrail. Even a small bump in the road is enough to flip an SUV traveling at high speed. On top of that, SUV roofs are not reinforced to protect the occupants against rollover; nor does the government require them to be.

Because of their vehicles' size and four-wheel drive capability, SUV drivers tend to overestimate their own security, which prompts many to drive like maniacs, particularly in inclement weather. And SUV drivers—ever image-conscious and overconfident—seem to hate seat belts as much as they love talking on their cell phones while driving. Bradsher reports that four-fifths of those killed in roll-overs were not belted in, even though 75 percent of the general driving population now buckles up regularly.

While failing to protect their occupants, SUVs have also made the roads more dangerous for others. The "kill rate," as Bradsher calls it, for SUVs is simply jaw-dropping. For every one life saved by driving an SUV, five others will be taken. Government researchers have found that a behemoth like the four-ton Chevy Tahoe kills 122 people for every 1 million models on the road; by comparison, the Honda Accord only kills 21. Injuries in SUV-related accidents are likewise more severe.

Part of the reason for the high kill rate is that cars offer very little protection against an SUV hitting them from the side—not because of the weight, but because of the design. When a car is hit from the side by another car, the victim is 6.6 times as likely to die as the aggressor. But if the aggressor is an SUV, the car driver's relative chance of dying rises to

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30 to 1, because the hood of an SUV is so high off the ground. Rather than hitting the reinforced doors of a car with its bumper, an SUV will slam into more vulnerable areas and strike a car driver in the head or chest, where injuries are more life-threatening. But before you get an SUV just for defensive purposes, think again. Any safety gains that might accrue are cancelled out by the high risk of rollover deaths, which usually don't involve other cars.

Ironically, SUVs are particularly dangerous for children, whose safety is often the rationale for buying them in the first place. Because these beasts are so big and hard to see around (and often equipped with dark-tinted glass that's illegal in cars), SUV drivers have a troubling tendency to run over their own kids. Just recently, in October, a wealthy Long Island doctor made headlines after he ran over and killed his two-year-old in the driveway with his BMW X5. He told police he thought he'd hit the curb.

To illustrate the kind of selfishness that marks some SUV drivers, Bradsher finds people who rave about how they've survived accidents with barely a scratch, yet neglected to mention that the people in the other car were all killed. (One such woman confesses rather chillingly to Bradsher that her first response after killing another driver was to go out and get an even bigger SUV.) The tragedy of SUVs is that highway fatalities were actually in decline before SUVs came into vogue, even though Americans were driving farther. This is true largely for one simple reason: the seatbelt. Seatbelt usage rose from 14 percent in 1984 to 73 percent in 2001. But seatbelts aren't much help if you're sideswiped by an Escalade, a prospect that looms yet more ominously as SUVs enter the used-car market. Not surprisingly, last year, for the first time in a decade, the number of highway deaths actually rose.

No Roads Scholars Here

Bradsher blames government for failing to adequately regulate SUVs, but doesn't fully acknowledge the degree to which it has encouraged SUV production by becoming a major consumer of them. Law enforcement and public safety agencies in particular seem enamored of the menacing vehicles, a fact on proud display when officers finally apprehended the alleged snipers in the Washington, D.C., area and transported them to the federal courthouse in a parade of black Ford Explorers and Expeditions. Judging from the number of official SUVs on the

Monster Truck Liberals

By Kukula Kapoor Glastris

"I DON'T THINK I HAVE ANY small cars," says the Budget rental agent surveying the collection of keys on a tack board behind her. I feel a stab of dismay. My reliable Subaru Outback is at the dealer, getting a transmission replacement, and my car of choice on these occasions is always the smallest car the dealership has in stock. I don't like, and am afraid of, driving large cars—a fear that dates back to the avocado green 1986 Ford Granada my husband bought in a moment of madness just before we were married. This was a car of great girth, with less than perfect brakes and handling. I knew I would never, ever own another big car after the Granada did a 360-degree turn on Massachusetts Avenue during a rainstorm, miraculously hurting no one, including me. And here I am, faced with the choice of driving away in one behemoth or other. I swallow, fix a smile on my face, and follow the now slightly exasperated agent to the silver Toyota Highlander in the lot. The agent smiles reassuringly at me as she walks me around the car and opens a door. "See?" she says. "You'll feel safe. And whoever that is for"—nodding at my son's booster seat—"will love it."

She pats me on the arm and I get in. Gads. I'm driving an SUV! Those monstrous vehicles that swill gasoline and hog the quaint narrow streets north of Georgetown where I live. Those cars that the perfectly coiffed and made-up young matrons drive (often down the center of the street) while I mutter obscenities because I cannot see around them. (This, after all, is Georgetown; not the African savannah! Who needs a Land Rover in the city, for cryin' out loud?) How could anyone drive an SUV? It is, after all, ecologically irresponsible. SUVs pose a hazard to anyone in a smaller car, they are expensive, and just the wrong kind of status symbol.

My husband and I felt virtuous and smug in our choice of the Subaru Outback. Yes, it was kind of a station wagon, but not quite. Consumer magazines gave its reliability and (relative) gas efficiency the thumbs up. It rode like a dream, and we could afford it.

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road today, law enforcement officials—those most likely to know firsthand the grisly effects of a rollover—are enthusiastic customers. Like the rest of America, police departments seem to believe that replacing safe, sturdy cars with SUVs is a good idea, though it's hard to imagine a more dangerous vehicle for an officer conducting a high-speed chase.

Government's taste for SUVs isn't limited to cops and firemen. There's hardly a city in America where the mayor's chauffeured Lincoln Town Car hasn't been replaced by an SUV. In Virginia, where state officials recently discovered that SUVs were wrecking their efforts to meet clean-air regulations, a few noted sheepishly that perhaps local governments should sell their own fleets, which had ballooned to 250 in Fairfax County alone. (A Fairfax County official told *The Washington Post* that public safety officials needed four-wheel drive and large cargo spaces to transport extra people and emergency equipment through snow or heavy rain—proof that even law enforcement officials misunderstand SUV safety records.)

As Bradsher details, because of their weight, shoddy brakes, and off-road tires, SUVs handle poorly in bad weather and have trouble stopping on slick roads. What's more, they're generally so poorly designed as not to be capable of carrying much cargo, despite the space. A contributing factor in the Ford Explorer-Firestone tire debacle was that drivers weren't told that their Explorers shouldn't carry any more weight than a Ford Taurus. The extra weight routinely piled in these big cars stressed the tires in a way that made them fall apart faster and contributed to the spate of rollover deaths.

I have a hunch that government officials' justification for buying SUVs is mostly a ruse for their real motivation, which is the same as any other SUV owner's: image. Officials can safely load up their fleets with leather-seated SUVs, whereas using taxpayer dollars to buy themselves, say, a fleet of BMW coupes would get them crucified (even though Detroit considers SUVs luxury vehicles and designs them accordingly). Police departments may claim that they need an SUV to accommodate SWAT teams or canine units, but there is no reason that Sparky the drug dog wouldn't be just as comfortable in the back of a nice safe Chevy Astrovan.

The same is true for nearly everyone who drives an SUV today. Of course, not every SUV owner is gripped by insecurity and a death wish—plenty of

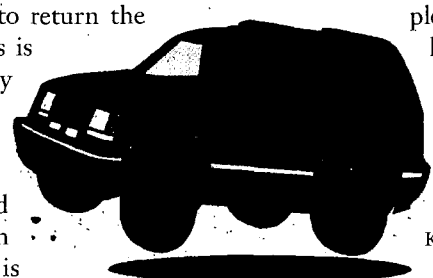
What's not to like? We looked down our noses at those SUV drivers. (Well, as much down as one can when one is sitting a good two feet below an SUV.)

I realize, as I begin driving, that I don't feel as absurd as I thought I would in my high perch above the Budget Rent-a-Car lot. In fact, it's great. I like the tight and responsive handling on the Highlander, the enormous side-view mirrors that all but eliminate blind spots.

By the time I pull out onto the roadway, I am in love. My sanctimony shoved uncomfortably aside, I realize why people buy these cars. It's because they are such fun.

My 12-year-old daughter, thinking that the woman in the SUV waving madly to catch her eye can't be her mother, strolls over to the car, her eyebrows lifting with that studied casualness of a preteen. "Cool car," she says slinging her backpack in, "are we buying it?" "Nice upgrade," says her middle school principal, patting the silver flank of the Highlander. "Is it new?" No, I admit, it's a loaner.

My five-year-old son has no constraints about acting detached. His large brown eyes become saucers. "Whoa, Mom! This is the best car we ever got! Is it ours? Oh yeah! Oh yeah!" He does his little celebratory dance in the back. His face falls a little when I tell him we will have to return the car when ours is fixed. "Why can't we buy it?" I tell him it is too expensive. And uses too much gas. (And is apparently—see above—deadly.) But now he has noticed the sunroof and is entranced anew.



I focus on the gas gauge. That needle has been dropping faster than I'm used to. My life behind the wheel consists largely of pick-ups and drop-offs within a 10-mile radius of my house. Which is hard on your brakes and gulps gasoline. But wouldn't a trip to the cleaners be so much nicer with this cushioned ride?

My daughter leans into me, wheedling, "Can we buy the car, please? Can you at least find out how much it is?" I promise her I will. Because now I really want to know.

KUKULA KAPOOR GLASTRIS *is a Washington writer.*

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otherwise reasonable people seem to get seduced by power and size (see sidebar). But if soccer moms and office-park dads really need to ferry a lot of people around, they could simply get a large car or a minivan, which Bradsher hails as a great innovation for its fuel efficiency, safety, and lower pollution. (And minivans don't have a disproportionately high kill rate for motorists or pedestrians when they get into accidents.) According to industry market research, minivan drivers also tend to be very nice people. Minivans are favored by senior citizens and others (male and female, equally) who volunteer for their churches and carpool with other people's kids. But that's the problem. SUV owners buy them precisely because they don't want the "soccer mom" stigma associated with minivans.

Police departments may claim they need an SUV to accommodate SWAT teams or canine units, but there is no reason that Sparky the drug dog wouldn't be just as comfortable in the back of a nice safe Chevy Astrovan.

While Bradsher does a magnificent job of shattering the myths about SUVs, he has a difficult time proposing a solution. Sport utility vehicles have become like guns: Everyone knows they're dangerous, but you can't exactly force millions of Americans to give them up overnight. And because the SUV is single-handedly responsible for revitalizing the once-depressed American auto industry, the economy is now so dependent on their production that it would be nearly impossible to get them off the road. Bradsher suggests regulating SUVs like cars rather than as light trucks, so that they would be forced to comply with fuel-efficiency standards and safety regulations. He also proposes that the insurance industry stop shifting the high costs of the SUV dangers onto car owners by raising premium prices for SUVs to reflect the amount of damage they cause. But these ideas, commendable though they are, fall short of a perfect answer.

Clearly, the best solution would be for Americans to realize the danger of SUVs and simply stop buying them. Social pressure can be a powerful determinant on car choices, as seen in Japan, the one country where SUVs have not caught on because of cultural checks that emphasize the good of the community over that of the individual. There are signs that perhaps public sentiment is beginning to shift against SUV drivers here, too, as activists have begun to leave nasty flyers on SUV windshields berating drivers for fouling the environment and other offenses. But for a true reckoning to take place, image-obsessed Americans will need to fully understand the SUV's true dangers—including to themselves—before they will willingly abandon it to the junkyard. Spreading that message against the nation's biggest advertiser—the auto industry—will be tough work. Drivers can only hope that Bradsher's book will cut through the chatter. ●

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Publication Title: The Washington Monthly
2. Publication No.: 7046-403
3. Filing Date: October 2002
4. Issue Frequency: Monthly, except combined Jan/Feb and July/Aug
5. No. of Issues Published annually: 10 issues/year
6. Annual Subscription Price: $44.95
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: The Washington Monthly, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: The Washington Monthly, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005
9. Full Name and Complete Mailing Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Markos Kounalakis, Publisher, W.M. Corporation, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005; Paul Glastris, Editor in Chief, The Washington Monthly, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005; Managing Editor: vacant
10. Owner: W.M. Corporation (a District of Columbia nonprofit corporation), 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgages, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: n/a

Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: October 2002

Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issues Published Nearest To Filing Date
Total No. Copies:	20,160	20,000
Paid and/or Requested Circulation:		
Paid/requested outside-county mail subscriptions stated on form 3541:	13,145	12,004
Paid In-County subscriptions stated on form 3541:	n/a	n/a
Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other non-USPS distribution:	4,926	4,451
Other classes mailed through USPS:	n/a	n/a
Total Paid/Requested Circulation:	18,071	16,455
Free Distribution by Mail (Samples Complimentary, and Other Free):		
Outside-county as stated on form 3541:	112	121
In-county as stated on form 3541:	n/a	
Other classes mailed through USPS:	n/a	n/a
Free Distribution Outside the Mail:	864	1,155
Total Free Distribution:	976	1,276
Total Distribution:	19,047	17,731
Copies not Distributed:	1,113	2,269
Total:	20,160	20,000
Percent Paid/Requested Circulation:	94.9%	92.3%

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House Negro

Why J.C. Watts is Congress' last black Republican.

By Ta-Nehisi Coates

J. C. Watts's memoir, *What Color is a Conservative?*, should be a primary text for Republicans dumbfounded by black America's loyalty to the Democratic Party. Perhaps more than any other book in recent memory, *Color* effectively demonstrates why African Americans recoil in horror when "Republican" is preceded by the adjective "black." By no means should this revelation be attributed to Watts, however. Naïve and obtuse, *Color* is a failed memoir that bears all the markings of Watts's press office. But in its lack of candor, in its total inability to grapple with complexity, *Color* unwittingly demonstrates why African Americans view Republicans with such disdain, and why, after Watts retires this year, there will not be a single black Republican in Congress.

WHAT COLOR IS A CONSERVATIVE?
by J.C. Watts, Jr.
with Chriss Winton
HarperCollins, $24.95

By now, Watts's story has been well trafficked through Washington's hoary corridors. Watts hails from Eufala, Okla. His father was a lifelong Democrat, with conservative leanings (pro-life, anti-welfare). He was stern, religious, and packed a pistol in his glove compartment. Watts was, of course, poor, but because his family embraced traditional values (hard work, community, church), they barely knew it.

Somewhat of a hellion, Watts was held in check by his tight-knit community and his father's penchant for corporal punishment. In high school and college, he excelled at athletics, rising to national fame as an all-American quarterback at the University of Oklahoma, where he won a national championship, went on to a career in the Canadian Football League, and became locally famous enough to run for Congress. Some years later, after hearing Senate candidate Don Nickles speak, he defied his father and became a Republican. It wasn't that much of a leap. He had been a conservative all along and was a Democrat only by inheritance. In 1994, Watts rode the Gingrich wave into office—the only one of 23 black Republicans running that year to win a congressional election—and brought his inspirational story to bitter, partisan Washington. Oh yeah, along the way, Watts had a few run-ins because he happened to be black.

And to Watts, that's all they are, minor run-ins without any systemic element. To his credit, he does not deny being the target of prejudice. But beyond this admission, he has almost nothing else to say on the subject—even though he gives himself plenty of chances. There are the whites who repeatedly question whether Watts, as a black man, can really play quarterback, invoking the common slur that blacks aren't smart enough to play that position. There is the white woman who calls Watts and his friends "dogs." There is the white man who tells Watts that even if he gets elected to Congress, he will just be another nigger. Yet, beset by all this venom, Watts—as he tells it—swallows all his anger after briefly lamenting the problem. In a way, his stiff upper lip is Jackie Robinson-noble, but the reader can't help but wonder about the conclusion he draws about the nature of American racism.

In one instance, as captain of his high school football team, Watts ends up being homecoming king and has to hold court with a white homecoming queen. The town's tradition has always held that the king and queen kiss at the center of the football field after being crowned. But despite being a popular guy in recently integrated Eufala, Watts and the queen do not kiss.

Ta-Nehisi Coates *is a New York writer who writes frequently on race and culture for* The Washington Monthly.

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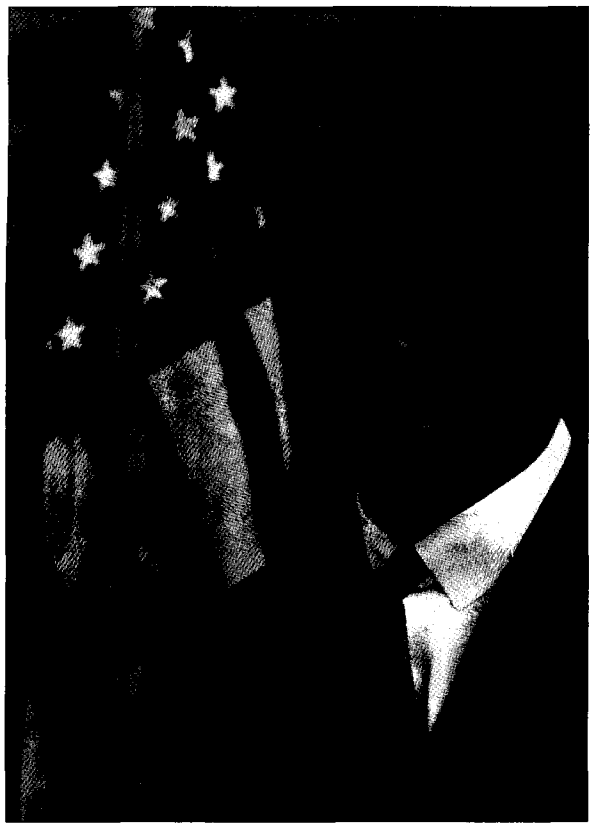

Rep. J.C. Watts (R-Okla.)

Watts is amazingly vague about the whole incident: "The big night arrived, but in the end, we didn't have the kiss that might have caused more problems than it was certainly worth. No big decision was made. We just didn't do it." Interracial relationships in the South are weighted with a legacy of lynching, rape, and sheer terrorism; yet from all of this, Watts can only conclude, "as much as Eufala had changed, we still had issues that none of us were certain how to handle."

In another instance, Watts tells how two brothers, "the MacGuire boys," terrorized him and other little black children for sport, to the point of chasing them in a truck. Yet Watts refuses to analyze what effect this abuse had on him, simply saying that it all worked out in the end because the MacGuire boys ended up in jail. Later, he recounts meeting an elderly white couple at a restaurant in Canada. They strike up a conversation with Watts and eventually invite him to their home for wine and cheese. Watts declines, but is touched by the invitation and notes that such a thing would never happen in his hometown. But he refuses to ask why, and this is the book's central problem as a memoir. It spends a lot of words but reveals precious little, especially about its purported focus: race.

To Watts, racism in the South never rose above the misguided tomfoolery of a few ignoramuses, a view that pretty much mirrors that of the GOP and highlights why conservatives have a hard time making inroads into the black community. Modern conservative ideology rests on an idyllic vision of the past, a time when men worked hard, women tended the home, and the whole family went to church.

The history of African Americans, more than any other minority group save Native Americans, severely complicates this picture. For in the past, white men didn't just work, they also exploited their sharecroppers and terrorized black businessmen. Families didn't just go to church on Sunday; they also went to lynchings with picnic baskets. But because conservatives venerate the past, race relations are necessarily simplified to paint the prettiest possible picture of America. So Jim Crow becomes a necessary evil, the Confederate flag has nothing to do with slavery, and lynch mobs were not formed by your fathers and sisters, but from misanthropes existing outside of society.

It is a reading of history that conflicts with everything African Americans know about themselves and about their tormentors. But for Watts, as a conservative politician, it is essential. If he really were to analyze race in his hometown, I suspect he would end up repudiating his own romantic vision of the South of yore, and consequently questioning his own party. But he does not allow himself this level of honesty, because at its core, *Color* is not a memoir but a defense of Watts's right to be black and Republican.

The tragedy for Watts and his conservative allies is that their own defensiveness is their worst enemy. Certainly one can hold conservative principles and question America's historic relationship with African Americans. Just look at Louis Farrakhan. But the GOP's rigidity, and ultimately, its tendency to airbrush the reality of racism, past and present, out of its vision of America, prevents the party from matching even the nuanced perspective of a man as dogmatic as Farrakhan, who recently has found a receptive audience among middle-class blacks with his lectures on personal responsibility and traditional family values. African Americans are acutely aware of this, and thus are acutely aware of the difference between being a conservative and being a Republican. While they don't advertise it, many blacks fall into the former category, but as things are, very few will ever fall into the latter. Which is why, when J.C. Watts leaves Congress, there won't be many people lining up to fill his shoes as that body's token black Republican. ●

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Sales to Minors

Can commercial culture possibly corrupt today's teens more than it did their parents?

BY ELIZABETH AUSTIN

ALISSA QUART BELIEVES THAT KIDS today are victims of an unprecedented barrage of slick, mind-numbing advertising, a phenomenon dissected at length in her book *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers*. To check her thesis, I called a 40-something friend and asked if she remembered which brand of sneakers she wore as a child. My friend burst into song: "Run a little faster, jump a little higher, feel a little stronger, in your P.F. Flyers!"

I was stunned; I'd always thought of her as a Red Ball Jets girl. But I wasn't surprised that the insistent commercial jingles of her childhood remained embedded in her brain. It's hard to imagine a baby boomer who doesn't know which brand of chicken noodle soup is "M'm! M'm! Good!," what kind of bread builds strong bodies 12 ways, or why Tony the Tiger starts every morning with sugar-frosted flakes. (For you youngsters out there, it's because they're "Grrrrrrr-eat!") It's certainly true that children today are bombarded by commercial messages in a way that was unimaginable back when there were only three networks, and children spent each endless week waiting breathlessly for the glories of Saturday morning cartoons.

BRANDED:
The Buying and Selling of Teenagers
by Alissa Quart
Perseus, $25.00

But it's an open question whether Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, the Disney Channel, and their ilk have made today's children more vulnerable to commercialism than their parents were. With so much kid-oriented programming available, no current shows can boast the hegemony—and commercial muscle—of old must-see juvenile hits like "Batman" or "The Monkees"; advertisers on those shows knew that every self-respecting third-grader in the country would either tune in or face playground humiliation the next day. It's impossible for an advertiser to make that kind of direct hit in today's cluttered media marketplace.

Children, Quart argues, have been transformed into "victims of the contemporary luxury economy." To her, the villains in this case are obvious: They are the corporations that heartlessly market to underage consumers, slavering after the annual $155 billion in discretionary income Quart says they control (although the source of that figure is not cited). Some of her anecdotal evidence is chilling, such as the 150 school districts nationwide that have accepted soft-drink companies' sponsorships, taking relatively small donations in return for exclusive on-campus access to the districts' thirsty young customers. Quart reports that one young rebel who wore a Pepsi shirt to his school's Coca-Cola Day was suspended for "insurrection."

Still, isn't criticizing a marketer for targeting a group of affluent consumers, whatever their height, equivalent to deploring your cat for targeting songbirds? It's in the nature of the beast. The real challenge is deciding whose job it is to bell the cat. Quart blames Congress for its failure to regulate advertising to under-18 consumers. She notes with approval that Sweden bans commercials on kids' shows, a move that demonstrates that "many European countries are much more enlightened than the United States in their attitudes and laws toward branding aimed at minors." But that's a spurious comparison. Unlike the United States, where commercial jingles and slogans have been part of the cultural fabric for more than half a century,

ELIZABETH AUSTIN *is the co-author of* The Good Girl's Guide to Negotiating.

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Sweden didn't allow any commercials on television whatsoever until 1991. (That ban had one unexpectedly lovely unintended consequence. Marketers, desperate to get buyers' attention, started plastering their brand logos on brightly colored hot-air balloons and setting them aloft over Stockholm.) And the current ban on marketing to kids doesn't actually work; to circumvent it, two Swedish channels simply beam their signals from ad-friendlier England.

The author seems to put more faith in legislative action than in parents' own ability to monitor their children's exposure to advertising and limit their purchasing power. Sadly, she may be right. Many parents, whether motivated by guilt or wrong-headed fondness, seem unable to resist their children's demands for expensive branded merchandise, even when those desires wreak havoc on the family budget. A few days ago, I was minding the cash register at our elementary-school book fair when a distressed single mother asked me to total her purchases. She had planned to spend only $60, but her son's wish list totaled almost $100. I offered to take back the most expensive volume, a $28 hardcover version of the *Guinness Book of World Records*. "It'll be out in paperback soon," I assured her. "He wants what he wants," she responded flatly, digging in her purse for a few more crumpled bills. How can we expect our children to build up any sales resistance when we ourselves are unable to say no?

Brand News

Although it's easy to share Quart's indignation about the branding of America's littlest consumers, it's unfortunate that her ire sometimes distorts her vision of popular culture. Her chapter on recent teen films proves that it's possible to delve so far into subtext that you can miss the text entirely. In bemoaning the lack of "responsible, liberal reflexes" in today's teen movies, she takes aim at *Bring It On*, *Legally Blonde*, and a token brunette movie, *She's All That*—a trio of warm-hearted, if featherweight flicks. In Brand's view, these films celebrate "influencers"—better known as "the cool kids"—to the detriment of everybody else.

But while it's true that the stars of these films are all substantially more physically attractive than, say, your average Miss America contestant, the plots of these movies all turn on the value of personal integrity over social acceptance. Even though these films are all so sugary they should have carried a warning to diabetic viewers, they're hardly evil. (Indeed, Quart distorts the most memorable line in *She's All That*. After the teen Galatea turns her back on high-end prom culture, she returns to her loving middle-class home to find her smitten young Pygmalion patiently waiting for her. As he draws her close in the warm, starry California night, she breathes: "I feel just like Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*—except for that whole hooker thing." Indefensibly, Quart cuts out that last, knowing phrase.)

It's a shame that Quart chooses to stack her deck, because she raises some interesting points about current teen culture and the adult marketers who have so effectively plugged into it. In her chapter on peer-to-peer marketing, she reports on the growing army of enthusiastic teens who cheerfully volunteer massive amounts of time to help their favorite brands reach other young consumers. These un- and underpaid teens believe their efforts eventually will be rewarded by cool jobs in fashion and marketing. While Quart tsks that the corporate adults who recruit these easily exploited young people "do not have the kids' interests at heart" (there's that carnivorous cat problem again), it's more interesting to wonder how nobler organizations might use these marketers' techniques to harness these kids' energy, hope, and idealism.

It also seems both pessimistic and disrespectful to dismiss the current generation of teens as "branded for life." Sure, if you walk through your local mall, you're likely to see more brand names displayed on young bodies than in the store windows. But there are also signs that this generation of kids is savvier than Quart believes. As evidence, take a look at "Daria," a teen-oriented cartoon about a young, suburban Dorothy Parker in combat boots. Smart, sarcastic, and socially aware, Daria repeatedly proves herself more than able to fend off the dark forces of marketing and materialism. When Lawndale High's principal sells the school's soul to Ultra Cola for a cool 50 grand, Daria takes action to get (most of) the company's intrusive ads removed from the hallways—and the curriculum. And when Val, the editor of an eponymous teen magazine, tries to exploit Daria as a one-girl focus group, the cynical teen denounces her as an opportunist and advises her to start helping young women with their problems, instead of adding to them. From 1997 until its final episode in 2001, "Daria" was a favorite of both sophisticated anti-corporate teens and the Abercrombie & Fitch wearers the show so gleefully lampooned. (In 1999, *Teen People* gave "Daria" a Readers' Choice award.) And which pioneering, anti-materialist pro-feminist network dared to create this intelligent, subversive show? MTV. Go figure.

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Political Booknotes

Beam Me Up, Scotty

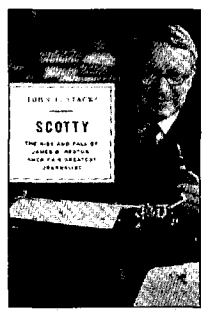
By Jonathan Alter

By the time I began writing a column in the early 1990s, Scotty Reston's example still held powerful sway over ambitious pundits—but not in the way Reston hoped. He had become a walking cliché, an object lesson in the dangers of cozy power relationships and mood-of-the-capital bromides. While an earlier generation of political journalists wanted to be Reston, mine wanted to avoid being him.

This, I knew even then, was deeply unfair to Reston and his career. Over 40 years, he published an astonishing number of major scoops, and his analytical batting average was high. Through most of *Scotty: James B. Reston and the Rise and Fall of American Journalism*, John F. Stacks judiciously explains Reston's contributions and shortcomings and rightly places him near the center of almost every significant chapter of postwar American history. Only Walter Lippmann was a more influential 20th century newspaper columnist. Then, at the end, Stacks tries to take some of it away, suggesting Reston became corrupted by his proximity to power.

That feels forced, as if Stacks needs to accentuate the worst in order to carry the baggage of his larger, tacked-on theme about the decline of journalism. It also muddies his basic point, which is that we have lost something important with the transition from thoughtful Reston-style journalism to the shout culture of the news business today. My own feeling is that we were too hard on Reston in the 1970s and 1980s. He's looking awfully good by comparison to the pooh-bahs of the business today.

Stacks opens with the quintessential Reston story: Moments after being pummeled by Nikita Khrushchev at the 1961 Vienna summit, President Kennedy returns to the U.S. embassy to pour his heart out to Reston, who has been told to wait there for him. The rest of the press is miles away. Stacks makes a big point that such access is simply unimaginable today, no matter how famous the journalist. But that's not quite true. George F. Will was so close to Ronald Reagan that he helped prepare him for the debates in 1980, then called him a "thoroughbred" on television. Sidney Blumenthal was closer to Bill Clinton while still a journalist than Reston was to any president. While no journalists are intimates of George W. Bush (he doesn't like 'em), many have been granted tremendous access to John McCain.



SCOTTY:
James B. Reston and the Rise and Fall of American Journalism
by John F. Stacks
Little, Brown & Co., $29.95

The larger point holds: The old chummy system where a handful of Washington journalists and government officials ran everything between them is in disrepair (especially since the death of Katharine Graham). But what has changed more since Reston's time is the place of the columnist in the hierarchy of the news business. With the possible exceptions of William Safire and Thomas Friedman, none today wield any direct influence over what happens in government. Columnists still have a role as validators of ideas and news, but they rarely break anything (try beating the Internet). And Reston spent his whole career without going on television more than occasionally. That would be almost impossible nowadays for an ambitious young journalist hawking his wares in an overcrowded marketplace.

Stacks ably charts Reston's rise from Scottish immigrant to University of Illinois golf champion to Cincinnati Reds publicity man and AP sports writer, with his storybook marriage to Sally well-rendered. I don't agree with his line that "if ever there was a born outsider, it was James Barrett Reston." No matter how poor, white Protestants are not born as far outside the mainstream as blacks, Hispanics, Jews, and Catholics. But Reston did move a long way in a short time, joining *The New York Times*' London bureau before he was 30, just on the eve of war.

There began a series of scoops, like Reston's sensational publication in 1945 of the secret founding documents of the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, which established the United Nations. Later, he convinced Sen. Arthur Vandenberg at a pivotal moment to renounce isolationism in favor of collective security, then broke the story. This crossed a line that journalists shouldn't cross but happened to be very good for the country. At the end of his life, Reston insisted that, contrary to legend, he didn't actually write Vandenberg's famous speech.

Through the Eisenhower and Kennedy years, Reston was a skillful player in everything of consequence in Washington. His reporters learned of both the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis beforehand; Reston passed on the requests not to publish from the Kennedy White House to *Times* publisher Orvil Dryfoos, who made the final calls. In the first case, the decision to tone down the story about the training of Cuban exiles was a mistake; full publication might have prevented a fiasco. In the case of the the naval blockade of Soviet forces during the missile crisis, the paper, after Kennedy assured Reston the country would learn the facts in just a few hours, made the prudent call to hold off. Were such an occasion to arise today, the Bush White House, which has not granted *The New York Times* an interview since the inauguration, might regret its contempt for the print press.

Reston was more than a gifted reporter; he was also a gifted protégé, going back to the impression he left as a teen on onetime presidential candidate James Cox (the 1920 Democratic nominee) after caddying for him in Ohio. The friendship Reston developed with Arthur Hays Sulzberger, the *Times* publisher, served him well on the way up, as he had to fend off Arthur Krock, the imperious Washington bureau chief. (Reston even borrowed money from Sulzberger to buy his Woodley Road house, now owned by Tim Russert.) Anyone with a taste for *Times* politics shouldn't miss the chapter on Reston's brief and painful tenure as executive editor of the paper in New York in 1968. Abe Rosenthal told

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Stacks that at one point he advised Reston to "shove it up your ass," though he later called Stacks back to say his memory of the exact epithet might be faulty.

The following year, 1969, might have been the beginning of the end for Reston. He happened to be on Martha's Vineyard when Ted Kennedy went over the bridge at Chappaquiddick but showed little of his old nose for news, and left the story to others. The 1960s confused him. His famous touch as a mentor never quite extended to women (years earlier he offered to hire the legendary Mary McGrory if she worked mornings on the switchboard; she declined), and he found himself heckled on campus. While Reston was skeptical of the war in Vietnam, he couldn't satisfy those critics who felt that he maintained too much faith in the system. When *Times* lions like J. Anthony Lukas and David Halberstam criticized Reston in 1973 for being irrelevant and credulous toward authority, his own authority went into steep decline.

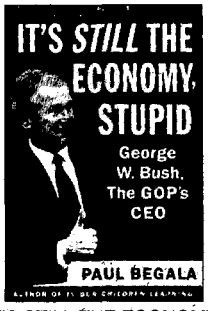
"What we do in the final lap is all that is remembered," Stacks writes, after describing how Reston had drawn too close to Henry Kissinger. But Lippmann also faded into irrelevance toward the end, and his reputation has survived better, even though he was more wrong-headed on more issues than Reston, who was a superior judge of character. Perhaps the difference is that Lippmann also wrote books, and his more intellectual insight into American life has a longer shelf life than any scoop. Fortunately, Stacks has helped right the balance. Above all, Reston showed that nice guys can finish first in journalism. For a business with its share of jerks, that's no small thing.

JONATHAN ALTER *is a contributing editor of* The Washington Monthly *and a columnist for* Newsweek.

Still Stupid?

By Jamie Malanowski

PAUL BEGALA, WHO WAS FORmerly Bill Clinton's campaign consultant and who now plays a likable, liberal bandy rooster on CNN's *Crossfire*, has a new book out called *It's Still the Economy, Stupid.* This is an unfortunate title, in part because it summons all the vim and rhythm and hope-against-hope cleverness of a one-hit wonder band's poorly received sequel. (Envision the remainder bin at Sam Goody's: *It's the Economy, Stupid; It's Still the Economy, Stupid; Stupider Than Ever!: The Best of the Raging Consultants.*)



IT'S STILL THE ECONOMY, STUPID
George W. Bush, the GOP's CEO
by Paul Begala
Simon & Schuster, $12.95

The other reason it's an unfortunate title is, of course, that the recent election was about many things—President Bush's popularity, the war on terrorism, a revulsion for the Democrats that periodically seems to grip the electorate, or perhaps just a subliminal realization that repudiating Republican candidates meant repudiating Bush, which most voters weren't willing to do—but the results suggest that it certainly was not about the economy.

But like so many great one-hit wonders—"Louie, Louie," "Wipe Out," and so on—the energetically argued *It's Still The Economy, Stupid* will still have fans, will still be a mainstay on the oldies stations, will still get fannies shaking at wedding receptions and bar mitzvahs, and will inevitably have a comeback. And that is likely to happen sooner than you'd think. The war is Topic A right now, and not much of an alphabet follows. But the midterm elections, by giving Bush virtually everything he needs to pass his agenda, likely means the war won't remain Topic A forever—or even for long. As Bush I demonstrated, even winning a war in a romp doesn't spare a president from a tanking economy. And if winning a war doesn't give a president a free pass, imagine how getting into a protracted stalemate in Iraq will play. At that point, we'll see how hummable Begala's song will be.

It should be pretty catchy. I can't explain why Democrats weren't able to tie the corporate scandals to the president's policies. But pointing out that the president wants to give massive tax cuts to outrageously overpaid CEOs who preside over companies whose books are rigged in order to dodge taxes and inflate stock prices that inevitably hit stockholders' retirement accounts and college funds seems as irresistible to me as "Na Na, Hey, Hey, Kiss Him Goodbye." Perhaps it's the Democrats' own corruption and culpability, represented by the repugnant, mud-caked Terry McAuliffe, that kept them silent. But it would be to their advantage to get past that. Electoral politics is a matter of Us and Them, and Begala is smart to want the Democrats to draw this distinction on economic grounds. Doing so with identity politics or cultural differences is a loser's game. But trying to build an Us Who Want Something coalition that's an electoral majority over the Thems Who Seem to Have Enough seems like a worthwhile proposition. Especially when the Bushies want to keep giving tax cuts to the hyper-rich and to repeal the alternative minimum tax for corporations, as Begala persuasively points out.

The genius of America is that it's founded on the mutually antagonistic principles of liberty and equality, and much of our history is the story of balancing the imperatives of those ideals. Many pundits made the point after the election that Democrats are bereft of ideas. But as long as Democrats remember that they're first and foremost the party of equality—equal rights, equal opportunity, fundamental fairness, the common good both at home and abroad—human nature ensures they will never lack for opponents.

But even with this message, the party still needs a messenger. Apart from Begala's former master, the Democrats haven't had one worth a damn since JFK. Making the Us versus Them argument work requires someone who can authentically represent the Us part of the equation. Bill Clinton never seemed like a man who tenderly nurtured his resentments, but he wore his working-class background like a badge of honor, and every voter who, at one point or another, had had to wear old shoes or their cousin's hand-me-down sports coat knew where his sympathies lay. The 1992 debate in which Clinton rose from his seat to tell a woman how he'd been personally affect-

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ed by the recession, while Bush pére sat behind him glancing at his watch, was a signature moment, and the next Democratic savior has to be capable of pulling something like that off.

But such scenes only happen if one set of circumstances pertains. Right now, it's not really the economy, stupid. Americans still haven't gotten over our fear of terrorism; we're concerned first and foremost for our safety. Whatever we're going to be afraid of in 2004 can be seen only dimly, if at all. But for Democrats to prevail, voters will have become afraid that Bush can no longer handle the job, whether it's terrorism or a ruined economy.

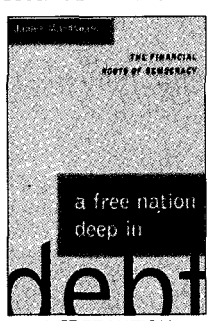
Jamie Malanowski *is a New York writer.*

Patriot Gains

By Phillip J. Longman

ON THE THREE MONTH COMmemoration of the September 11 attacks, Secretary of the Treasury Paul H. O'Neill, yielding to congressional pressure, held a press conference to announce a new way Americans could fight the war on terrorism. Besides going to the mall or investing in the stock market, they could go to the bank and buy up the government's brand new "Patriot Bonds."

But unlike the great war-bond drives of the past, this campaign involved no celebrities—not even Bono—and what little press attention it received was mostly derisive. These "Patriot Bonds," it turned out, were just regular Series EE savings bonds with a new label, and what revenue they raised was not even earmarked for the war on terrorism. "Don't buy a Patriot Bond just because it makes you feel good," sneered one financial columnist. "If buying a bond doesn't fit into your investment plan, you'd be better off purchasing an American flag."



A FREE NATION, DEEP IN DEBT
by James MacDonald
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $30.00

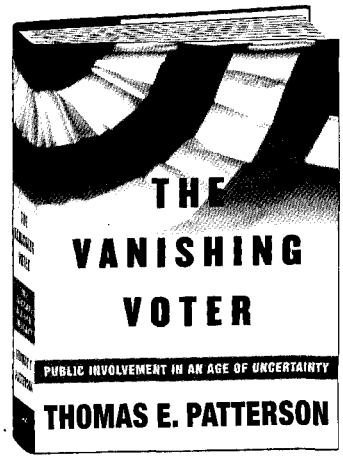
Yet nine months later, the Treasury Department was pleased to announce a 36 percent increase in the sale of ordinary saving certificates since they were relabeled as war bonds. It's not clear how much of this can be credited to patriotism, and how much to the tanking stock market. But the phenomenon surely must cheer James MacDonald's heart. For it is just such "citizen creditors" of the government, he argues in his new book, *A Free Nation, Deep in Debt*, who keep despotism in check and who are the founts of democracy.

This assertion might seem odd to James Carville, who once mused that he would like to be reborn not as the president or the pope, but as the bond market—because then he could "intimidate everyone." It would also provoke objection from Thomas Jefferson, who railed against public debt as a tyranny imposed by dead generations. But properly understood, MacDonald's thesis does provide an insight into why mass democracy emerged in the modern era. Kings and dictators might be very good at imposing order, but as early bankers learned the hard way, they can't be trusted to pay back their debts. In modern democracies, however, ordinary citizens usually are all too happy to snap up government bonds, even when they are inferior investments, because they can't conceive that their elected politicians will ever allow for a default. As the cost of war has grown ever higher, this democratic advantage in finance has more and more determined the course of history, MacDonald argues.

The link between public debt and democracy was commonly perceived in the 18th century. MacDonald opens his book by quoting an anonymous English pamphleteer, who in 1719, wrote:

"No Man whatever having lent his Money to the Government on the Credit of a Parliamentary Fund has been Defrauded of his Property ... The Goodness of the Publick Credit in England, is the reason why we shall never be out of Debt ... Let us be, say I, a free Nation deep in Debt, rather than a Nation of Slaves owing Nothing."

The despotic monarchy in France, meanwhile, learned that while it could clip coins and sell offices and titles to rentiers, it could not match the English



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in raising low coupon debt. In 1774, a French public official warned that "if people believe [Louis XVI] to be a despot, it will be impossible to open loans, or if that route is taken, they will be so costly that England will always finish by having the last écu in any war." Fourteen years later, when the Bourbon monarchy declared bankruptcy and recalled the long-banished Estates General, the point became settled: However many coins may be in his treasure chest, a king can never acquire the credit line needed to finance a modern military without ceding power to "the people."

In the 20th century, MacDonald concludes, the link between public debt and democracy became even more profound. Viewing history, as always, through the lens of public finance, he informs us that during World War I, it cost the Allies $36,485 to kill an enemy soldier, as opposed to $11,345 for the Central Powers. But despite the Allies' military inefficiency, they could borrow far more from their "citizen creditors"—and that, in the end, made all the difference. Who won the Great War? MacDonald quotes a prize-winning student essay of the time: "I am known all over the world and hailed as the right hand of freedom's champions. Many scraps of paper has the Kaiser torn up but I am the scrap of paper that will tear up the Kaiser. I am, as probably you will have guessed, a Liberty Bond."

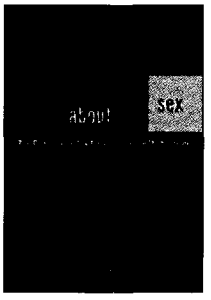
For MacDonald, a former investment banker, this first book is clearly a labor of love. Coming in at 550 pages, it is a magisterial history, ranging from the Bronze Age to the present, of public debt and how it changed the balance of power between nations. In some instances, MacDonald may exaggerate the necessary connection between debt and liberty (just ask any Brazilian these days), but he does make an important point. Though today's "citizen creditors" buying up "Patriot Bonds" are unlikely to turn the tide in the war on terrorism, they do exemplify a reserve of trust between citizen and government that is a sure measure of national power, and that depends on the will of the people.

Phillip J. Longman is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation in Washington, D.C.

Talk Dirty

By Christina Larson

RALPH REED MUST BE RIDING high. Most political strategists credit the Georgia Republican state chair and former Christian Coalition chairman with engineering Saxby Chambliss's upset of Max Cleland that gave the GOP control of the Senate. In addition to his well-publicized attacks against Cleland for blocking a proposed homeland security agency, Reed's team employed a classic scare tactic to swing the critical bloc of white women voters who were the election's deciding factor: stirring fears about what information and access to contraception their children could obtain at school.



TALK ABOUT SEX
Battles over Sex Education in the United States.
by Janice M. Irvine
University of California Press, $24.95

Two weeks before the election, Chambliss's campaign began airing ads attacking Cleland's vote to purportedly allow school nurses to dispense the morning-after "abortion drug." In reality, Cleland had supported legislation to allow states, rather than Washington, to determine how federal aid to schools would be spent. But Reed's ploy worked. By painting Cleland as a liberal, especially on matters related to sex and children, Chambliss won the socially conservative state.

This strategy of campaigning to "recapture the culture" from corrupting modern influences is a time-tested tradition for conservative strategists. Flagship groups like the Moral Majority in the 1980s and the Christian Coalition in the 1990s attacked sex education and family planning initiatives, polished tactics to mobilize their base, and discovered that sex sells.

Janice Irvine, a sociology professor at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, contends that campaigning against sex education has been "central in the rise to political power" of the New Right. In her new book, *Talk About Sex*, she traces the Right's history of exploiting societal fears about sexual promiscuity and moral decline.

In 1964, a Quaker reformer and one-time Planned Parenthood medical director named Mary Calderone founded the Sex Education and Information Council of the United States (SEICUS), a private group dedicated to promoting sex education. That same year, Barry Goldwater declared his candidacy for president and set about channeling grassroots conservative anxiety about the "sexual revolution" and social change into a national movement.

Few issues galvanize conservatives as much as those concerning sex—from feminism, abortion, and gay rights to pornography and sex education. Early opponents of classroom instruction about contraception in the 1970s included the John Birch Society, best known for its Cold War-era conspiracy theories. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority adopted the cause in the 1980s, perfecting shock tactics that made sex ed seem X-rated, and fanning conservatives' fears about moral upheaval and societal decline. By the 1990s, Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson was accusing sex education of "teaching kids to fornicate, teaching people to have adultery, teaching people to get involved in every kind of bestiality, homosexuality, lesbianism—everything the Bible condemns."

As Irvine explains, sex became the organizing bridge between the Old Right that opposed communism and anti-American activities, and the New Right, which focused on social themes and family values. Grassroots activists mastered this inflammatory rhetoric, likening sex education to pornography, arguing that lessons about contraception would encourage kids to be sexually active, and vilifying instructors as pedophiles.

Conservatives extended their influence through painstaking organization and an emphasis on local politics. While most liberal groups like SEICUS focused on advocacy and public health, the Christian Coalition established thousands of local chapters nationwide, where activists endorsed school board candidates who opposed sex education, distributed voter guides, and even provided legal advice for pastors who wished to

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stump for candidates without jeopardizing their tax-exempt status. Conservative investors funded media outlets, including evangelical radio shows, and think tanks, like the Family Research Council, to crank out statistics aimed at discrediting the effectiveness of contraception.

But despite their success in attracting members and direct-mail donations, the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition had difficulty overcoming public support for sex education, intensified by rising teen pregnancy rates and the onset of the AIDS crisis. Conservatives developed the idea of "chastity" education and lobbied for federal support to devise curricula that would encourage abstinence until marriage. Ronald Reagan's administration first financed pilot programs for such just-say-no classes; congressional Republicans engineered further funding through the welfare reform bill in 1996. And George W. Bush is moving to fulfill his campaign promise of raising abstinence funding to $137 million annually.

Though it has generated less public outcry than their campaign against sex education, conservatives' efforts to promote abstinence classes have been more successful. Irvine cites one study which found that the percent of public school instructors who taught abstinence as "the *sole* means of pregnancy and disease prevention" rose from 2 percent to 23 percent between 1988 and 1999.

Conservative commentators like Paul Weyrich bemoaned the death of collective moral outrage when Bill Clinton's popularity ratings remained sky-high despite the Lewinsky scandal and his subsequent impeachment. Irvine suggests this verdict was premature—conservative outrage hasn't died, but shifted focus. Today, it can be seen in the proliferation of abstinence classes, often with state support. For example, in North Carolina, passage of a recent state law mandating abstinence-until-marriage curriculum has prompted school administrators to remove pages about contraception and abortion from high school biology textbooks.

Irvine predicts that with federal support from Bush, the movement will continue to grow. The results of the midterm elections support this. Georgia Republican governor-elect Sonny Perdue, whom Reed also helped to elect, is already talking about a $10 million state abstinence program—suggesting, as Irvine argues, that the conservative movement is alive and well.

CHRISTINA LARSON *is the associate publisher of* The Washington Monthly.

Size Matters

By Robert J. Shapiro

JEFFREY MADRICK'S *Why Economies Grow* is a short work with a big ambition: Debunk mainstream economics about the best way to promote faster economic growth. Most economists believe that the key to higher growth is more capital, better-trained workers and, most powerful of all, a steady stream of economic innovation. For Madrick, a country's economic development depends less on capital, labor, and new ideas than on how large its market is and how consolidated its industries are. Large and growing markets, he argues, produce economies of scale, and only when industries achieve such scale economies can more capital, labor, and new ideas produce faster growth. In the work's final analysis, the point of this novel thesis is not really to revise economic thinking, but to justify the return of big government spending that can pump up the market and promote those economies of scale.

"The American experience," he writes, "is the clearest example of the influence of large and growing markets on economic development." The book's strongest suit is a recounting of 19th and early 20th century economic history that reminds us that America's economic success is unimaginable without a vast and open domestic market that spurred business to develop new forms of production and distribution. The power of a large and growing market to drive economic progress is also useful to keep in mind when considering the rapid ongoing development of China and India.

Market size matters, but it hardly explains everything. Brazil and Russia with their vast domestic markets have repeatedly stumbled on the path of economic development, and nations with small internal markets flourished in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries and in Southeast Asia in the late 20th century. So Madrick concedes that a

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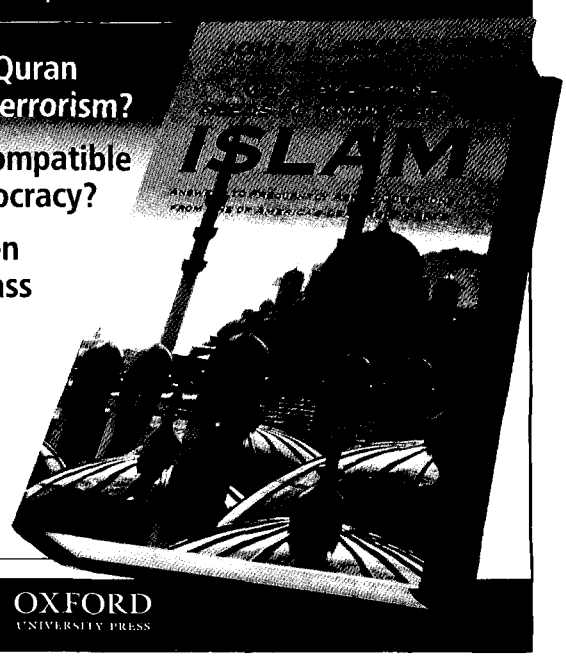

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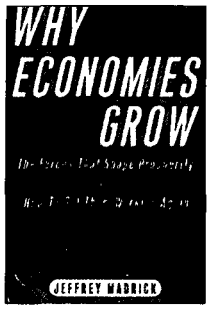
strong economy needs capital, broad literacy and education, sound political and economic institutions, and much else. The point of focusing on the extent of a country's domestic market is to move his argument from an exposition on how economies develop to his own explanation for why economies grow.

The analysis of growth presented here is at once novel and nostalgic. As large markets drive economic development over decades, so strong market demand is said to drive growth year to year in a very particular way: by spurring firms to achieve vast economies of scale in the production of standardized products for those markets. For the author, the paradigm of sound growth is the 1950s, when everyone in the vast American market drove a Chevy or a Ford, bought the same cereals, wore the same grey flannel suits—and the economy grew faster than in any decade since.



WHY ECONOMIES GROW: The Forces That Shape Prosperity and How We Can Get Them Working Again
by Jeffrey Madrick
Basic Books, $26.00

To make this case and rehabilitate demand-driven economic policy, Madrick must not only refute conservative dogma on the primacy of capital and tax cuts, he must also discredit the neoliberal approach based on innovation and fiscal discipline. Here, the argument has to contend with the consensus of modern macroeconomics about what makes a modern economy grow. This consensus begins simply enough: The economy grows when the quantity or quality of its capital and labor increases, or the ways in which they are combined improve. When more people work or we invest more capital, GDP should rise; when workers' average skills improve or businesses use capital more efficiently, the economy should expand faster. When managers come up with better ways to organize their workplaces and run their firms, or innovators invent new ways of using labor and capital, growth should accelerate.

Following the work of Robert Solow (who received the Nobel Prize for his effort) and Edward Denison, most economists also agree on the relative importance of these factors. The media trumpeting the New Economy in the late 1990s went overboard, but economics supports their basic case: Solow, Denison, and others found that innovation in its various forms is the most important factor in U.S. productivity growth. At least 34 percent of U.S. growth from 1929 to 1982, for example, can be traced to the development of new products and processes; new ways of financing, marketing, and distributing goods and services; and new approaches to organizing and running a business. Innovation matters so much because it affords the economy a way of escaping the law of diminishing returns that otherwise would inexorably reduce the punch from simply adding more capital or labor.

Innovation plays the largest part, but only a part. The increasing numbers of workers and hours they work can account for 25 percent of growth over those years, and another 16 percent can be traced to workers' increased skills. After that comes the conservatives' favorite: Increases in the capital stock of equipment, factories, offices, and so on, explain 12 percent of the growth of those 53 years. A number of other factors also matter, including Madrick's favorite: Economies of scale realized by businesses with the emergence of regional and national markets can explain about 11 percent of growth. The economy's better use of labor has yielded a comparable effect, principally in women moving from household work to offices and Southern agricultural workers moving to industrial jobs in the North and Midwest.

Why Economies Grow never directly challenges this economic canon. Instead, it tries to recast the various factors as mainly consequences of growing demand. New technologies, new ways of marketing and distributing goods, and so on, all matter; but they are said to come about to meet the demand of expanding markets. The economic payoff for Madrick comes when the mass employment of these innovations produces new economies of scale.

This view requires some imaginative reinterpretations of recent economic developments. The productivity slowdown of the 1970s and 1980s is said to reflect not just the usual suspects like inflation and labor-force changes, but the rise of consumer demand for specialized products. This new era of "consumer choice" fragmented the mass market for standardized goods, producing countless niche markets that could never achieve real economies of scale. Similarly, we owe much of the productivity resurgence of the latter 1990s not to the efficient application of information technology (IT), but to a revival of a traditional mass market in standardized versions of IT products, with the attendant economies of scale for their producers.

In the end, the analysis lacks, well, any proof. But Madrick's point is not to provide data or evidence, but to shift our economic thinking away from factors like innovation and skilled labor, and back to the demand side of the economy. That provides the basis for his own agenda for prosperity: To keep domestic market demand growing, we need ongoing budget deficits to finance public investment, a higher minimum wage, expanded job programs, pensions and healthcare for all workers, more income support and training for the unemployed and so on, and on.

The question is: Without a lot of innovation, is the American market for traditional liberalism large enough to sustain its continued development?

ROBERT SHAPIRO, *a fellow at the Brookings Institution and a columnist for* Slate, *directs the economic consulting firm Sonecon.*

Roadside Attraction

By Alan Greenblatt

GUTZON BORGLUM WAS EXACTLY the sort of contractor who gives a client fits. He was always charming at first and made reassuring promises that he would get the job done in a hurry. But once he was on the payroll, he always ran behind schedule, always asked for more money, and always blamed someone else for the delays. He received one of the harshest pink slips of all time when he was fired from the project of carving a monument to Confederate heroes at Stone Mountain, Ga., his bosses citing his "offensive egotism and delusions of grandeur."

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But Borglum quickly converted insult into triumph, packing his bags for South Dakota, where he landed the job of carving Mount Rushmore.

That, in a nutshell, is the story of Borglum's life, as told by John Taliaferro in *Great White Fathers: The Story of the Obsessive Quest to Create Mount Rushmore.* The "classic Borglum" behavior was to "demand control, ruffle feathers, allege conspiracy, exaggerate evil—and lastly, foul the nest." Borglum was clearly a disagreeable sort, a deadbeat who was disloyal to his friends and consorted with the Ku Klux Klan. But there are plenty of bastards and difficult characters in the world, and not many of them have the perseverance, talent, and selling ability to make as big a mark as Borglum made.

Borglum initially promised he could finish Mount Rushmore in a year's time. (It took 14.) The idea of carving a massive sculpture of historical figures in the Black Hills originated with a local historian named Doane Robinson, who knew that South Dakota wanted a major attraction to put it on the tourist map. Robinson originally had in mind western figures such as Lewis and Clark, John Fremont, and Red Cloud. Borglum wasn't his first choice, but he improved on Robinson's vision with the idea of honoring truly national figures, starting with Washington. He also charmed the pants off Robinson and the other local power brokers. "I count it one of the great experiences of my life to have spent two days with a man of his genius and high character," Robinson wrote soon after.

Unfortunately for Taliaferro, the tales of Borglum's charms mainly take that sort of generalized turn. Borglum's shortcomings, on the other hand, have been passed down in technicolor detail. Much of the book is made up of Borglum's constant fights with both patrons and subordinates. He was an anti-Semite but extended the reach of his vitriol in a letter to *The New York Times* about "the Jewish question" to conclude that "all immigrants are undesirable." Harold Ickes, FDR's Interior Secretary, said that when he had to deal with Borglum, "I always feel like equipping myself as a man does when he fusses with a beehive."

Borglum's charm, however, wasn't the point. The evidence of what the man was capable of accomplishing is all around us, from southwestern South

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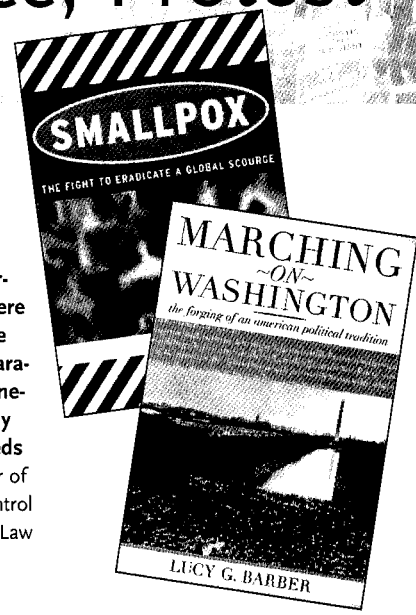

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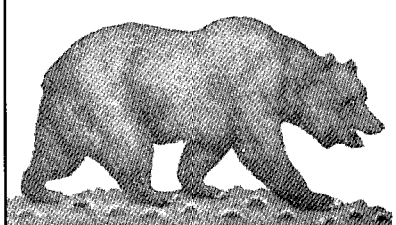

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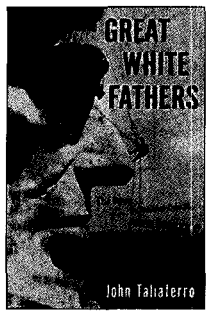
Dakota and Sheridan Circle in Washington, D.C., to Borglum's celebrated "Seated Lincoln" in Newark. Borglum, like so many artists of his generation, was critical of mechanical reproduction. Taliaferro does a fine job in depicting the "very human" aspects of Rushmore, from the trompe-l'oeil effects of Theodore Roosevelt's glasses and softness of Jefferson's mouth to the egotism, publicity-mongering, bluster, and safety concerns of Borglum.

Even away from the sculpture studio, Borglum thought big. He invited 200 Czech fighters to camp and train on his Connecticut property before heading to the front during World War I and organized winter rations for drought-stricken Sioux at Pine Ridge a few years later. During the war, Borglum poured $17,000 of his own money into an investigation of corruption and safety violations in the military's Aircraft Production Board.



GREAT WHITE FATHERS: The Story of the Obsessive Quest to Create Mount Rushmore
by John Taliaferro
Public Affairs, $27.50

Perhaps because Borglum kept so many pots boiling, it takes Taliaferro more than 200 pages before he gets around to recounting the first drill bit entering the granite at Rushmore. But Taliaferro, a former *Newsweek* editor and biographer of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Charles M. Russell, is a discursive writer anyway. Many of the subjects he takes up along the way are worthwhile, including the rise of car-based tourism and the state of public sculpting at the dawn of the 20th century. Taliaferro also does a nice job of summarizing the battles—legal, cultural, and actual—that Native Americans have fought over their lost sacred ground in the Black Hills.

Like a tourist distracted by the many wares for sale on the road to Rushmore, though, Taliaferro can't resist straying from the main line of his narrative to take up too many other subjects. When it comes to recounting Borglum's career, Taliaferro is a strong and disciplined writer, but he goes all flabby tackling numerous ancillary matters, such as the site's new parking garage and the day Regis and Kathy Lee came to film at Mount Rushmore. *Dances With Wolves* may have been filmed in South Dakota, but do we really need five pages about Kevin Costner at this stage in his career?

Borglum died just before his greatest achievement was completed, at a cost Taliaferro puts at under $1 million. His death has become part of Rushmore lore—Borglum falling, Moses-like, just short of his goal. Reading Taliaferro's breezy, winning account, though, it's hard not to feel that Borglum's end was fitting. He was always moving on to the next thing; actually bringing projects to completion often became a mere afterthought. Nonetheless, reading about the many accomplishments of this restless, selfish, self-promoting, bigoted man, you can hardly help but wonder whether you're making enough of your own short time on this earth.

ALAN GREENBLATT *is a staff writer at* Governing.

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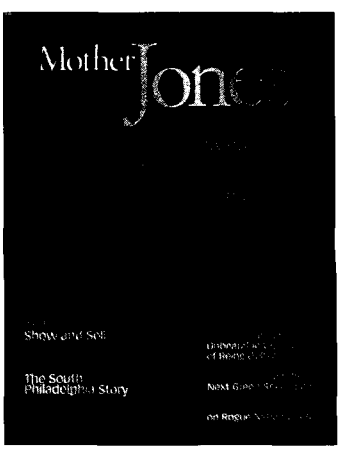

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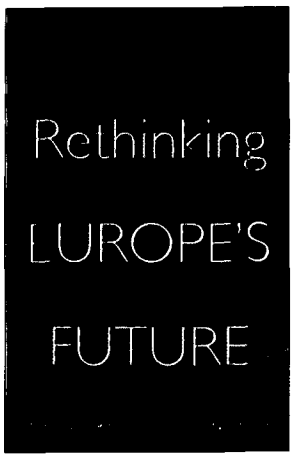

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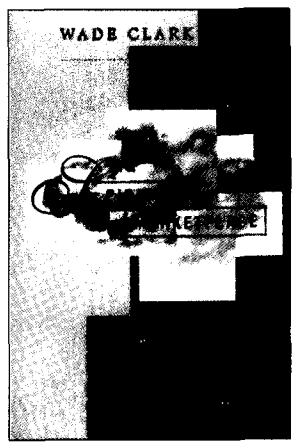

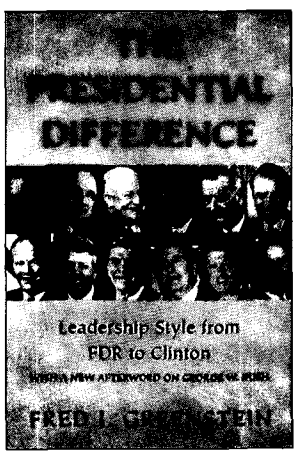

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